"An Untold Story Retold" is a tender reckoning
with memory and meaning—
an autobiography that stitches togcher the
quiet beats of life shaped by storytelling.

From the early flickers of imagination to
the spotlight of the stage, Sydney ***S. Chellen***
invites readers into a journey that's
both fiercely personal and universally resonant.

Through unspoken trials, joyful creation,
and the profound art of nartative reinvention,
this is not just a life remembered—
it's a ***life re-authored.***

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An Untold Story Retold

AUTOBIOGRAPHY *Illustrated*

By SYDNEY S.CHELLEN

3rd Edition

theChellens

Key

b=born
d=died
m=married

ARMON
b. 20.09.1900
d.21.07.1950
m. Navamah Narainen

MARDAY
b.20.01.1936
m. Manie Ramsamy

KISNA
b.23.12.1941
d. 12.03.2024
m. PeddyPadiachy

SYDNEY
b.12.04.1945
m. Georgina Scicluna

DEVEGI
b.14.06.1960
m. Rajendra Motay

DESSIGA
b.07.06.1961
m. Jaysheree Kalasoopatan
d. 18.08.2014

MALIGAYE
b.30.09.1963
m. Annoux Govinden

PREGA
b.25.12.1964
m. Nirmala Mooneyan

DORAJ
b.21.06.1969
m. Comila Ramasawmy

PRISCILLA
b.08.01.1971

NADIA
b.24.06.1973

RUBINA
b.10.08.1977
m. Steven Craig Smallsman

Brandon
b.3.1.1995

Brenda
b.8.1.1996

Sanjiven
b.14.01.2000

Sharavanen
b.14.02.2009

Keerthika
b.09.09.2011

MAURICE
b. 08.11.1979

DAVID
b.02.01.1973

PATRICIA
b.17.06.1971

Also by SYDNEY S CHELLEN

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A Touch Of Desire
Revenge Of The Beast
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Along Came Kevin
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Where The Waters Meet

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Arun And Leila Crossing The Lagoon
The Architecture Of Silence
The Woman Made Of Gold
The Pulse Beneath
The Gilded Betrayal

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An Untold Story Retold

Sydney S. Chellen

I dedicate this book to all my nephews and nieces and their off springs.
It is also dedicated to
my brother Marday,
my late brother Kisna,
my late mother Navamah,
my late father Armon,
my wife Georgina,
my sons Maurice and David,
my daughter Patricia
and grandchildren Mia and Olivia.

An Untold Story Retold

SYDNEY S.CHELLEN

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY *illustrated*

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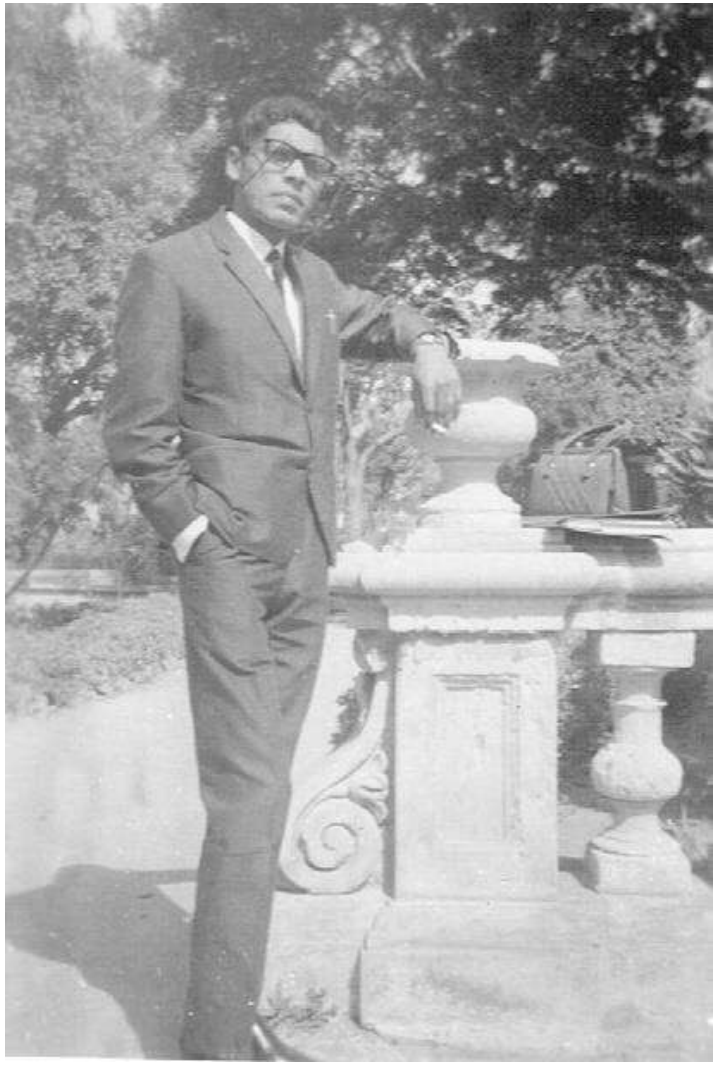
Designed and typeset by Sydney S Chellen MA, BA(Ed), PGCE (FE), RNT, RCNT, SRN, RMN

Soliloquy of a Life

We are cast upon this earth,
not by chance, but by design.
Our days — fragile and fleeting —
form but a single act
in the great theatre of time.
When the final scene dissolves into dusk,
and the curtain falls without sound,
we slip quietly from the stage,
leaving only echoes behind.
Memory does not cling to the performer,
but to the grace of the gesture,
the truth in the voice,
the gifts left for those still listening.
This book is my soliloquy.
A candid telling of the child I was,
the man I became —
a journey through love,
marriage, fatherhood,
and the tender ache of growing old.
Here you'll find photographs —
fleeting glimpses —
of kindred spirits
who brushed against my life
like wind through a field of wheat.
If, in these pages, you find a glimmer,
a question answered, a sorrow shared,
or simply the comfort of knowing
you are not alone in the telling —
then my part was worth the playing.

Sydney S. Chellen, 2025



Sydney S. Chellen

-28th March 1995-
My first address at a world conference
held at Harrogate, Yorkshire, United Kingdom.

The paper I delivered was on
computing in healthcare.

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Sydney S. Chellen, 1970

Sydney S. Chellen

PREFACE

In 2004, I published my autobiography *An Untold Story* and released a limited number of copies. The book offered a vivid and honest account of my childhood, career, marriage, family life, and my role as a father and grandfather—the joys and hardships of living, woven with photographs of those who've touched my life.

Having left my homeland, Mauritius, in 1967 to settle in the United Kingdom, I soon discovered that members of the Chellen family were scattered across the globe—in the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, Italy, Canada, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Spain, Ireland, South Africa, Switzerland, Germany, India, Belgium, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and of course, Mauritius itself.

This realisation inspired me to put pen to paper and record aspects of my life for anyone curious to know. After months of research, I found immeasurable joy in uncovering that my great-great-grandfather, Padayachy Chellen, was born in India and passed away there in 1945—the very year I was born in Mauritius. Sadly, despite my efforts, little more has come to light, apart from the fact that he left two sons: Mootoosamy and Soopayah. Mootoosamy emigrated to South Africa, while Soopayah settled in Mauritius.

Further research revealed that my great-grandfather, Soopayah Chellen, had one son: Tambaram. My grandfather Tambaram Chellen married Miss Valiamah Pursooramen, and they had six children—two daughters, Janagee and Goindoo, and four sons: Candasamy, Moonsamy, Soopayah, and my father, Armon Chellen.

If ever my children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and their descendants wish to trace their roots, they'll have a far better starting point than I did. Writing my autobiography has been my way of leaving them a piece of myself.

By 2013, I had accumulated a vast archive of photographs and video clips of family members. I decided to compile them into a set of four DVDs and upload selected clips to YouTube, searchable via the keyword *thechellens*. It also felt fitting to extract relevant sections from *An Untold Story* and incorporate them into this new edition.

Now, with age comes reflection. Revisiting these memories—through words and images—has helped me better understand the events that have shaped the person I've become.

One day, while chatting with my wife, I began sharing stories from my youth. She found them hilariously vivid and suggested they deserved a place in my autobiography. This led to the creation of this third edition—*An Untold Story Retold*.

While preparing this version, I took the opportunity to revise several sections, add new insights, and update the birthday list. In keeping with the spirit of the original publication, I've chosen not to update most photographs.

Though the book is structured into twelve distinct chapters, they remain deeply connected. You're welcome to read it in whatever order suits you—cover to cover before watching the videos, or vice versa. I do recommend reading the book first to gain fuller meaning before diving into the visual journey.

Each DVD runs for approximately fifty minutes and is divided into segments of 5–10 minutes. You can watch them in one sitting or select individual sections from the menu.

Currently, two video clips are available on YouTube, with more planned for future release.

I hope you enjoy this latest edition of my autobiography. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed.✍

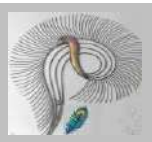
Sydney S. Chellen, 2025

AVAILABILITY

A hardcopy of this book is in OLOF Palme Library of the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, Mauritius and in the CITY HALL library of THE CITY COUNCIL OF PORT LOUIS. It is at the disposal of subscribers in the Mauritian Authors Section for loan purposes OR

To purchase a copy go to either:
www.amazon.co.uk.

or read for free:
https://archive.org/details/@sydney_s_chellen



PROLOGUE

Throughout my life, people have occasionally made me mad, disrespected me, and treated me poorly. God will deal with them. I refuse to carry hate in my heart and refuse to allow it to consume me.

It's been almost fifty-eight years since I left my homeland, Mauritius. I was twenty-one at the time, working as a correspondent typist at K. Sunassee's Store, earning very little money and generally impatient with the progress I was making in my life.

When a chance to leave my country and take up nursing studies in a school of nursing in South Wales came up, I took it thinking that such a career would be good for me, and give me a better chance in life.

After discussing the matter with my brother Kisna, I began to make preparations for my departure to a land far away from home and proceeded to bid farewell to relations and friends I cared about. Most of my friends who also wanted to go abroad to study nursing were astonished that against all odds I had managed to succeed where they had failed. Almost everyone I met asked me some version of the same two questions:

'How did you manage to obtain a place?' And then, 'Your family is not rich. How did you get the money to pay your fare?'

I must say they were reasonable questions; reasonable because most of my friends came from poor families and to go abroad to follow a career in nursing, one needed to apply to the British Council in Mauritius and pass a selection interview. More often than not, to succeed you needed to have a good connection with the person doing the selection. Since he was on the take you needed to be able and willing to pay a bribe of 400 rupees to be sure to be chosen. I was neither able nor willing to do so. After giving it a lot of thought, I told myself that there had to be another way and as fate would have it I found it.

Instead of making my application through the British Council, I decided to apply directly to the Chief Nurse of Cefn Coed hospital in South Wales and my application was successful. Three months later, I was on my way to a foreign country that was to become my second homeland.

As it so happened, my decision to leave for pastures new had worked out. Three years later, during which I studied hard, my efforts, were rewarded. I had subsequently passed all my exams, secured British citizenship, and obtained a permanent work permit in the National Health Service (NHS).

Slowly I began to enjoy the British way of life, but I've never forgotten my roots.

I had continued to work my way up the promotion ladder, followed further studies and finally left the National Health Service to enter the Education Sector where I became a Senior University Lecturer, a job I enjoyed until my retirement. During that period I got married to a gorgeous Maltese girl and raised three beautiful children.

But the years have taken their toll on me, partly because I am much older now and each successive year reminds me that I am getting closer to meeting my creator and partly because I was not always able to prepare myself for every eventuality. Unfortunately, this is one of my many flaws and the fact that this may be endemic in others is no consolation because of that particular flaw my life became like a roller-coaster. Sometimes I would find myself on top of the world and at other times I would feel like I was in the dump.

Shock and denial; pain and guilt; anger and bargaining; depression, reflection and loneliness; yes, I have been through them all but somehow at some point, with a bit of help from God, I was able to adjust and reorganise myself. It is this acceptance that part of being able to appreciate happiness is to experience sadness that has kept me going and having a good woman by my side has also helped.

Like anyone else, I have had my share of bad luck. One of the unluckiest things that happened in my life is that I lost my father and to lose him when I was only four years old made it much worse for me. With him **not** being around to nurture me, meant that I had to grow up without a father figure to guide me. Not having a father is like not having all the pieces to a puzzle…you can still make out what the picture is, but it's still incomplete. Tough as this has been though, I've survived largely due to having a wise, patient and resourceful mother and two helpful brothers to parent me when it mattered.

Looking back on my life, I can clearly remember how on that Friday afternoon

of 3rd March 1967, I boarded the passenger ship, Jean-Laborde at the dock in Port Louis to follow an unknown future. It was the day when Grenada gained partial independence from Great Britain, when the United States performed nuclear tests at the Nevada test site and composer George Longue died at the age of 66. Most importantly it was the day when my life was to change forever. That day, standing on the deck watching the assembly below, I felt the ship slowly leaving the harbour. The face of my mother stood out in the crowd, and I could feel what she would have been feeling. Overcome by my emotion I could not stop the tears running down my cheeks.

After twenty eight days at sea, passing through ports such as ***Durban, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Somalia, Cairo*** and ***Tripoli*** to reach France, I finally landed in the United Kingdom with one small suitcase and 200 rupees(less than £4) in my pocket, and unlike the poet Oscar Wilde, as I went through British customs all I had to declare were my hopes and dreams.

As I restarted life in South Wales, I couldn't help feeling so far away from everyone dear to me. Being amongst strangers in a foreign land scared me so much that for one year I stayed within the confines of "Cefn Coed Hospital" courtyard. It was, however, crystal clear to me that I needed to grow up fast if I was to manage myself successfully.

For reasons I would rather not disclose, when I had left my homeland, I felt unable to communicate with anybody at home. That made me more determined that if I did not succeed, no one would ever know what had happened to me. For almost ten years I maintained complete radio silence.

Quite often when I am resting on my sunlounger in my back garden at Chamarel house I can't help wondering what would have happened if I had not left Mauritius when I did. I would, I suppose, have had a life, but what kind? One thing is certain; my life would have been very different. I would have continued doing the job I had and in due course got married, have a few kids and gone through life like anyone else with no means or opportunity to realise my full potential. I certainly would not have become a lifelong learner and continue to broaden my mind. I doubt if I would have discovered life outside my homeland as I would have been too preoccupied slogging myself for peanuts to put food on the table.

Though, I think I am what I was destined to be, nevertheless, pointless as it may be, sometimes I indulged in the fantasies of, 'If so-and-so had happened, I should have done so-and-so', or, 'If I had married so-and-so, I suppose I would have had a different life.'

One way or another though, we would always find our way to our destiny, because I am sure we ***are*** following a destiny: our destiny in our life. Of course, it may be possible to embellish our destiny, or even spoil it, but it is ***our*** destiny and so long as we are happy following it, it will give us harmony, and help us to cultivate a mind at ease with itself.

I am hazy now as to how long I'd dreamt of a better life for myself during my formative years, but it certainly was not weeks or months, it was more like years. Only I knew the unhappiness that resided inside me and I needed to change it, and so I did. However, it came at a cost. During my settlement in the UK, a combination of wonderful and sad things has touched my life. Thankfully my mother raised me to be as strong as a rock, so I have a survivor's instincts, which came in handy when I felt my world was falling apart.

Having turned 80, I do not feel as strong as I used to. I've the occasional odd aches and pains popping up especially when I least want them to. I guess this is the price of old age. Each day I live on is a gentle reminder that I am reaching the end of the road and it is only a matter of time for the curtain to drop and for me to leave the stage forever. How, if at all, I'm remembered is for the audience to decide.

One of my dreams was to have my own family to care for, so that as I grew old and weak I would have a personal network of trusted people around me—people who would do unto me, as I had done unto them.

Finding the right woman to share my dreams with, was not easy. Of course, there were willing Welsh, Scottish, Irish, and English girls for me to choose from, but I was reluctant to form a long-term relationship with any one of them. I did not particularly want to return to Mauritius either to look for a desirable partner. So, I cast my net further afield. Strange as it might sound even to me, a postage stamp I had in my collection led me to Gina—who came to share my life, and fifty-eight years on, she remains my rock. It isn't by the words she speaks, but by her actions, I can tell that she still LOVES me even though I can be quite boring at times.

No sooner had Gina and I been married, the family I'd craved for, started to materialise. I had dreamt of a family unit like:

-"The Ewing's in the TV soap Dallas" or

-"The Waltons" where nuclear and extended families share their lives and support each other.

Today I am a husband with an adorable but frail wife, a father of three grown-up children with unique qualities, a grandfather with two gorgeous grand daughters, and a respected retired Senior University Lecturer. I have a detached five-bedroom house in the Garden of England, more commonly known as the county of Kent, and a three-bedroom house and a little white Suzuki in Beau-Bassin, Mauritius. My colleagues call me Syd007 because I drive a BMW sports convertible (made famous by Pierce Brosnan as James Bond in Goldeneye). I live within my means and I can't say that I have financial worries. Yet, sometimes I feel just as lonely and poor as I felt when I first arrived in the UK, so many years ago. I guess, as my family is getting smaller, loneliness is rearing its ugly head.

Unfortunately, that large family network I had planned for did not materialise. I am not sure where, if at all, I went wrong. There is a saying that you only get what you sow; it would appear that sometimes it does not matter what you sow, you will still get what you are destined for. Although my life has been quite a learning experience and a series of ups and downs, my wife and I have always managed to work things out together. After a quarrel, no matter how upset we might feel with each other, to avoid carrying bad feelings overnight we would kiss and make up before midnight. This long-standing strategy of ours has and continues to serve us well.

There have been many times when it was obvious that some things were not going to happen for us no matter how hard we tried. To avoid chasing impossible dreams, we had cut and run.

It has been a hard lesson to learn that anyone can create a family and has the power to control how many children they have; but no matter how many sacrifices you make to give them everything you never had and more; they and they alone can determine how they pay you back. If by bad luck you do not get back what you think you should, you need to simply pick yourself up. Do not blame them for disappointing you; blame yourself for expecting too much! It took me a long time to realise that, perhaps a better way is never to expect anything from anyone. No expectations equal No disappointments and in turn equal No heartaches!

To keep going and not to depress those around me, I do the best I can to hide my inner feelings. This is not always the best thing to do. Sometimes I wish that there were people I could talk to and cry with! Over the years I have mellowed a lot. Now, I am much freer in general about my outlook on those around me. Outsiders looking in would say I have done well for myself and I would agree. I do as much as possible for those dear to me. Therefore I can say that, 'I've done OK and I'm OK!' However, among those who matter to me, there are three people I would have liked to have done more—they're my mother and my two brothers. Sadly a while ago I lost my mother and more recently my brother Kisna. It is impossible to quantify the void they have left in my heart.

It is an unpleasant fact of life that we all have to go sometimes. When death comes and lays its icy hand there is no escape, nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. "Sceptre and crown must tumble down…" as Shakespeare cleverly puts it. From dust we came and into dust we must go. Still, when faced with the reality of it, love it or loathe there isn't anything one can do about it.

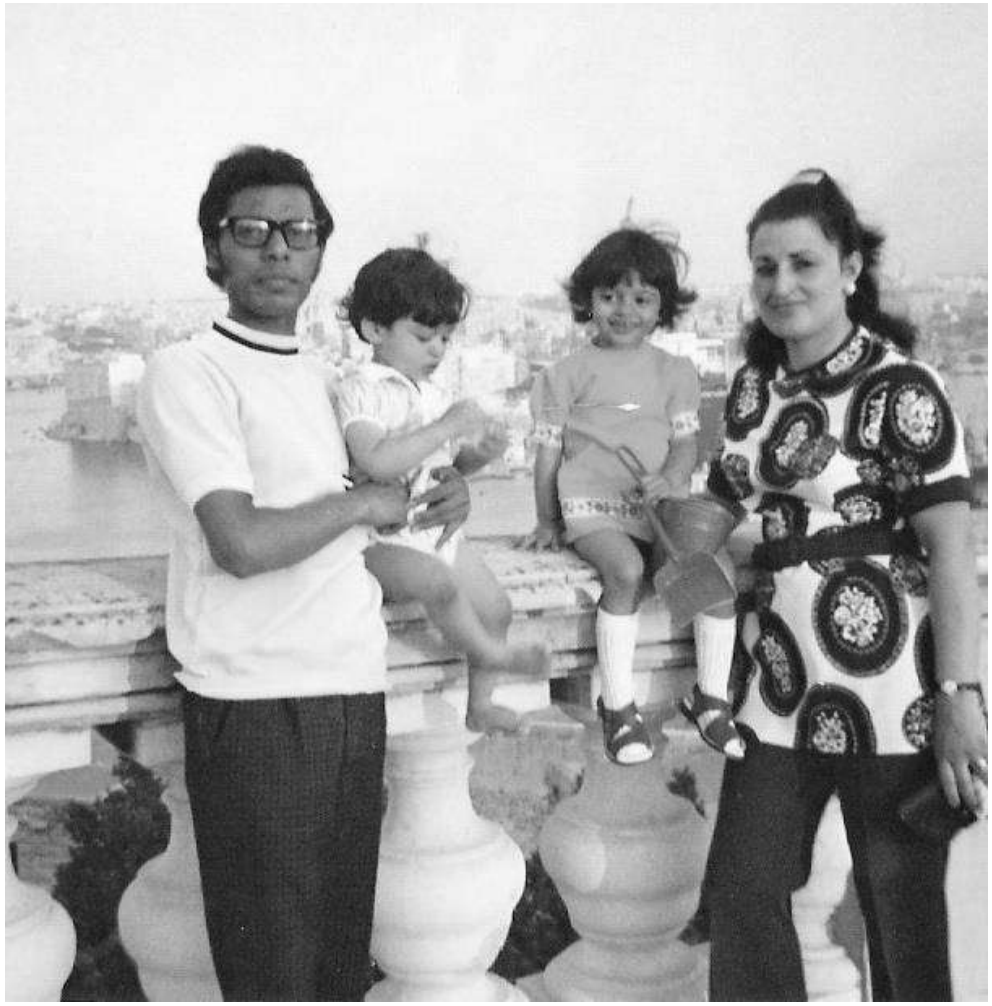
Far too often we take people we purport to love for granted until they are gone. While they are around we often do not tell them enough how much they are loved and appreciated. Somehow we expect them to know it by our actions, but when actions are coupled with words, we all know, they are a powerful and unbeatable combination. Optimus Prime puts it delightfully: "The greatest weakness of most humans is their hesitancy to tell others how they love them while they're alive." I asked myself, could this apply to me and I am ashamed to say it does: "I haven't done it often enough!" ✍

*"My name is: **Sydney S. Chellen**. I'm a retired Senior University Lecturer and an Author-Novelist. Now I spend my time travelling. This is my story and I hope you enjoy reading it."*

Gina with fiancé Syd
1967

Syd with wife Gina

"Two hearts, one road, and a car that carried our dreams—those early days filled with love, laughter, and the promise of forever."



"Sun-kissed in Malta, with the sea behind us and love all around—our little quartet, woven in joy and memory."

Chapter One

The Beginning…

August 1967

Just three months after leaving Mauritius to study in South Wales, I found myself on holiday in Malta—a world away from the life I'd known.

As I stood in quiet reflection, gazing toward the horizon from a small village called Qormi on the island of Malta G.C., a thought stirred within me:

Only weeks earlier, I was in Mauritius, unable to afford the bus fare to get to work.

And now—here I was, surrounded by sunlit stone and Mediterranean breeze, a guest in a land I'd never imagined reaching.

The contrast was staggering.

Fortune had shifted, if only slightly, and I was learning to hold both gratitude and disbelief in the same breath.

CHAPTER 1- THE BEGINNING

Armon Chellen
[b.20.09.1900; d.21.07.1950]
Buried in Moka Cemetery, Mauritius

For me, life started here, when my father Armon Chellen married my mother, Navamah (née Narainen). My dad (photographed below) was one of four brothers and two sisters. I know a little bit of him as a dad or as a person because when he died I was just four years old. I am told he was not lazy. He left our house in Beau Bois every morning and went to his office.

He used to return in his car for lunch, and in the afternoon went back to his office, worked all afternoon, and returned to the house in time for dinner. He had a few friends and loved spending time with them. He and my mother went out when the occasion demanded it. It was only later that I learned that my father had a few enemies who wished him harm. On one occasion they even tried to burn his house down. Long after his death, I met some of his acquaintances who said: 'Ah! I remember Armon. I'll never forget him. Not many like him nowadays.'

He had no outstanding characteristics. He was reasonably intelligent. I think that he had a simple and loving heart, and he really cared for his family. He had a great sense of humour because for the few years I knew him he made me laugh. As far as I recall, there was no meanness in him, no jealousy, and he was almost fantastically generous with a natural happiness and serenity.

He was on good terms with his brothers Moonsamy, Candasamy and Soopaya and he loved his two sisters: Janegee and Goindoo dearly.

Out of the six people in the photograph, my father was the first one to die. He died in the Moka Civil Hospital. The doctor said that he died from a condition called pulmonary embolism. As far as I can recollect, my father was a caring man and took care of his family in the way he knew best. He was what could be described as a 'Jack of all trades'. He worked as a chauffeur and as a paymaster for a rich landowner. He was also skilful in repairing watches and clocks. So, in his spare time, he would repair the watches of people in the village where he lived during my formative years. It is rumoured that he enjoyed social drinking at the local bars and would occasionally engage in card games with his friends. On one occasion, whilst drinking with his friends, he bought a lottery ticket and put it in the back pocket of his trousers.

left to right

my father's three brothers and two sisters
*Moonsamy, Janagee, Candasamy, **Armon**, Goindoo, Soopaya.*

At the time of writing, everyone in the photograph on the above had passed away.

As the story goes, when my father discovered he had the winning numbers and searched for the ticket, he became very angry with my mother because she had unknowingly washed away the lottery ticket. How much exactly he had won is not known but the amount was large enough to have made a significant difference in our lives.

When my father got married, my mother was quite young she was about nine years younger. She was so devoted to him, as demonstrated by the fact that she never remarried when she later became a widow at a very young age. In those days a woman's place was definitely at home. My mother spent her time taking care of the house chores and looking after her children, whilst my father worked his socks out to bring in the money. This worked fine while he was alive.

My mother was a beauty with an enigmatic and arresting personality—less forceful than my father—shy but knew how to take care of herself. She was five feet five inches tall, with soft black hair, piercing brown eyes and a cute face. She had no formal education, but somehow she was able to get by. Like most women, her dreams were to marry a prince and live happily ever after.

Her prince charming turned out to be Armon, a chauffeur with a basic education. But he was handsome and charming, and it was easy to see why my mother had been attracted to him.

I am interested in my parents, not only because they were my parents, but because they achieved that very rare production, a happy marriage, which unfortunately was cut short by my father's untimely death. There aren't very many completely successful marriages these days. Is there a formula for success? I can hardly think so. My mother Navamah (Née Narainen) was one of three sisters and a brother. I never knew her father and to my knowledge, there is not even a photo of him, which means I do not even know what he looks like!✍

◀ *My brother Kisna with my mum*

► *My brother Marday and I*

Death having robbed us of a father, we were left to find for ourselves!

From
Armon
Chellen,
in the 19th
century,
to
Sydney
S. Chellen today,
31 very varied men
and women
have been born.
Whilst most of them
live on a small island
called
Mauritius, several of
them are scattered
around the world.

When death strikes…

When my father, at the young age of fifty, suddenly died with a blood clot in his coronary arteries, life took on a completely different complexion. My mother finding herself a widow with no earthly possessions or support, had to step out of her world, a world of security and thoughtlessness, to enter the fringes of the world of reality. It is undeniable that from the man of the family, my father was, came the stability of the home. Whenever I had done something wrong, my mother would say, 'Wait until your father comes.' A phrase often used by most mothers. It is a testament to a wife's belief that their husband knows best. Indeed, a father is the rock upon which the home is set. What the father says usually goes and we as members of the family accept it all unquestioningly. Why shouldn't we? After all, in most cases, especially in those days, the father provides meals; the father sees that the house runs to rule; the father provides stability and security.

After my father died, whom alone my mother loved, she was unwilling to solicit

protection or relief from anyone else. However, misfortune had armed her with courage. She found work to look after my brothers and me. This was not easy to achieve because being a kept woman for many years she had no special skills or education. Finally, she took up work as a servant. The wage being so poor, life became a struggle.

We were all in primary education. My eldest brother, Marday, was just completing his PSLC (Primary School Leaving Certificate) and was hoping to enter secondary education. My mother could not cope with her low wage. That led her to cut short the education of Marday and send him to work. I do not doubt that if my father had not left us so early, my brother Marday would have had a brilliant career.

Whilst some of his school friends became doctors and others held well-paid employment, he ended up working at a petrol station to earn the much-needed cash. Around the age of 22, he had a chance to leave Mauritius for England, but my mother managed to persuade him to get married instead. In 1959, on May 27th actually, my brother Marday married Manee Ramsamy, and as per eastern custom, his new bride came to live with us in the town of Beau-Bassin. I remember how thrilled I was when my mother remarked that my sister-in-law Manee was going to have a baby and her name would be Devegi. I stared at my mother. 'Annie (as I usually called my sister-in-law) having a baby?' I was dumbfounded. I cannot imagine why I was so surprised… after all married women do have babies… but things are always surprising when they happen in one's own family. It took a while before I could take it in. I probably sat with my mouth open for quite some time. Then I said, 'How exciting. When is it coming? Next week?'

'Not quite as soon as that,' said my mother. 'You have to wait nine months.'

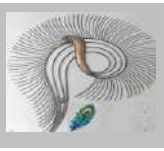
'Nine months?' I was deeply chagrined. I could not believe I had to wait that long to have a niece. I forget what my attitude to sex was but I was old enough to realise it was a physical process and I never believe the story that the navel was a keyhole, and that there was a key that fitted it, which was kept by my mother, who handed it over to my brother, who then unlock it on the wedding night.

I took the idea of having a niece out into the garden and dwelt on it a good deal. Not quite the little sister I had always wanted but she was the next best thing and quite nice too. It was one of the most exciting events in my life. I was going to be

1968
My eldest brother Marday in his young days (age 22). He played a very decisive role in my life. He was my father-surrogate, my teacher, and my shaper. My only regret is that I never knew him as a brother. Nevertheless I owe him a lot and to me he is priceless. As you can see he is as almost good looking
as I.

My second priceless brother, Kisna as he was way back in 1967. Without his financial help probably I would never have been able to raise the required finance to pay my passage to Wales.
March 1967

"I didn't know where I was going, but I knew where I refused to stay—and sometimes, that's enough to start a journey."



an uncle—it sounded very grown up and important and I could not wait for her to arrive.

By then my brother Marday had succeeded in obtaining a better-paid job in a "sack-making factory". In no time his leadership qualities were recognised and he was made foreman.

On the other hand, my brother Kisna did not like school very much and he was delighted when my uncle Parapen living in a town called Vacoas took him as an apprentice. Amazingly, in a short space of time, he became a successful tailor in his own right and started to manage his tailor shop. Born on 23rd December, 1941, he was a typical Capricorn. I remember him as a very quiet and docile guy who usually had very little to say for himself. Although he tended to become frustrated with the absent-minded dreamers, he usually handled all social interactions with understanding and a mild temper. I was always marvelled at his ability to keep a cool head, but I was most impressed with his determination. Whenever he was met with a challenge he felt worth his while, there were no obstacles that kept him from conquering it. He valued loyalty and devotion over all else. He would do anything to help the security of his loved ones. One small negative habit of his was that he became quite talkative and overbearing, especially when he had had a few drinks. He did tend to get upset very easily. His general tendency was to keep his troubles to himself. My mother used to describe him as a 'sous-noir', meaning extremely secretive.

As far as I can remember he was generous and he would go out of his way to help anyone if he could, but he could also be quite mean without meaning to be. Being self-employed he would always carry a lot of money with him. He would go around with a pile of Mauritian notes of various denominations bulging out of his shirt pocket. As I was not earning at the time, my only sources of acquiring some pocket money were from my mother and two brothers. Sometimes, I would approach my brother Kisna and solicit some cash. Most of the time he would dig deep into his trousers pocket and hand me a coin or two. But if I were unlucky to catch him in a less generous mood, he would say he had no coin to give me. I would stand there staring at the paper money visible through his shirt pocket, and muttering to myself, 'Why don't you give me one of those lovely notes you stingy so and so?'

My brother Kisna was a creature of habits. He would always undress and lay his clothes in a tidy pile on the chair in his room. One day I decided to sneak in and pick his pockets. I got away with it a few times. As the saying goes, sooner or later the bubble will burst. Indeed it did, and my brother told my mother that I had been stealing his money. In my mother's book, this is a behaviour that she would not tolerate. She went mental and quite rightly punished me severely. Did I learn my lesson? I sure did. ✍

The Prophecy

"You may be eating brown bread now but one day you will eat white bread!..."

After the death of my father, the question arose whether we should continue to live at Beau-Bois, isolated from the rest of our relations. Here, I think, my mother's judgment was better than anyone else's. She thought that it would be a bad thing to stay on. The house we were living in belonged to the establishment my father was working for. Now that my father had passed away, there would come a time when it might be taken away from her. She decided to leave Beau-Bois, the village where I was born, and we came to live together in a small ordinary thatch house at 48, Dr. Pepin Street, in the town of Beau-Bassin. We were now closer to my grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins and nieces.

The conditions of our life having changed after my father's death meant social occasions practically ceased. Although my mother did occasionally take me to weddings where I would meet some relatives, I was more interested in eating a piece of the wedding cake that got dished out after the ceremony. Money was always scarce. We were so badly off and had to economise in every way. It was, of course, all we could do to survive. I am sure my mother and brothers felt poor. If they did not, I certainly did. I felt poor all the time because we were living on very little money. Initially, we did not have electricity and so to light the house we used petrol lamps. Food was cooked on charcoal or a small fire using dry sticks which we had to fetch from the field as we could not afford to buy proper fire logs from the shop. There was no water supply to the property either. So we had to use

a public tap located on a street away. It was my job to fetch pails of water every day to fill a bottomless barrel. I say bottomless because no sooner had I filled it, the water was quickly used up.

We had an outdoor toilet commonly called 'Pit Latrine' and the bathroom was just an empty room attached to the side of the kitchen. To take a bath I would use cold water from a bucket and pour it over my head with a can. As our economic situation improved we did have a water supply and electricity. Until then we had to make do with what we had. When it was time to eat, we had no chairs or a dining table. We would sit on the floor in a circle and eat using our hands. I very rarely had a second helping primarily because there was none, but when there was, I had to make sure that there was not one grain of rice left on my plate; otherwise, my mother would get cross. On one occasion, after having asked for more I could not eat it because I was full up. My mother feeling that I had made my eyes bigger than my stomach sat with me with a broom in her hand and forced me to eat what was on my plate. Since then if I do ask or take a second helping I always make sure I will be able to eat it all.

My two brothers including my mother would be away working whilst my sister-in-law stayed at home doing the house chores, busy preparing to give birth to her first child and I went to college. When I was not doing anything important, my brother Marday insisted that I help my sister-in-law with some of her tasks. Surely I had no problem with that you would say? Of course, there was… it meant I could not go out and socialise with my friends as often as I wanted to. That was a problem and for me, it was a big one. I wanted to be like every normal kid, not locked in and bothered with mundane things like housework. This was not my idea of fun!

Mauritius was and still is notorious for cyclones and each time there was one, many people would often be left homeless. In their wisdom, my mother and two brothers had decided to borrow money to build another house made of bricks on the remaining plot of land. Mr. Maxime, the Architect who designed the house was also the person who built it for us. He put in hours of work to get it finished. My brother Marday would also help when he was not at work. To save on man-power my brother insisted that I give the builder a helping hand. Whilst it was a fair request, I hated the work required of me on the building site, especially when

This letter, addressed to my cousin Vel Vencatachellum, was written by my father three years before he left this world.

For six decades, it lay hidden in Vel's loft in Birmingham—tucked away like a sleeping memory. Then, in 2004, while clearing through the dust and silence of old boxes, Vel found it. And sent it to me. When I held it in my hands, time folded. My father's voice—steady, familiar, impossibly alive—seemed to rise from the page and speak directly to me. It was as if he had reached across the veil, not to haunt, but to comfort. To remind me that love, once written, never truly fades.

I shared a copy with my brother Marday, who knew our father's cadence as well as I did. The original now rests in my safe, not merely as a document, but as a sacred echo. A whisper from the past that still knows my name.

Bien Aimé

Beau-Bois
ce 25/5/47

Ces quelques lignes pour te faire savoir que j'ai reçu ta lettre et que toute la famille de Monestier va bien, excepté moi qui est encore malade. Je te fais savoir qu'on avait mis le feu dans ma case le 7.3.47 par la place de Dien on avait pu éteindre le feu. le 23.3.47 les deux autres frères et on avait attrapé le voleur mais il est en prévention on est en train de faire l'enquête préliminaire, le 23.3.47 les deux autres frères de l'accusé m'a frappé un coup de bâton à la tête et plusieurs autres coups j'étais à l'hôpital de Moka le 14.4.47 maintenant je suis à la maison je souffre toujours de mon reins et mais je pense que l'affaire de battre va bientôt passer. que le type qui m'a frappé est terminé il est embarqué le 26/4.47. Je t'explique un peu son apparence

C'est un créole Malgache à peu près 18 ans plus courte que toi bien noir il habite à B.Bois comme il s'appelle Bastien Saorimootoo mais si tu peu le rencontrer dans ton chemin le deuxième frère aussi est en route, il embarquera le 29/5/47 il s'appelle Joseph Saorimootoo il est un peu plus courte que l'autre bien noir aussi j'ai vu Roland j'ai fait tout tes excuses à tes autres camarades Madame Jean elle est allée habiter à Moka Route Camp Sang Jusque à moi je suis Soigneux de rester à B.B. s'il y a quelque chose de te parler dire jusqu'à la fin de l'affaire Jean Pierre te souhaite bonne chance et moi aussi de même. Je te fais savoir que Mr la est marié Dimanche le 25/5/47 ton Papa m'annonce une bonne nouvelle comme quoi tu est Caporal je suis bien ravi. Dirige toi bien parmi que tu connais bien la militaire de ton papa fais tout ton mieux pour t'engager et pour toi même aussi à ton retour c'est tout que j'ai à te dire. pour le premier fois des embrassades à toute la famille et plus beaucoup des compliments à l'entourage. Bien à toi ton dévoué Cadet Amour Chellen

it was raining. Quite often I would hide in a corner or sit underneath a Longan tree, crying and wishing for something better for me. One day Mr. Maxime noticed me looking sad, and he came and sat next to me.

'What is the matter, son?' he asked appearing quite concerned.

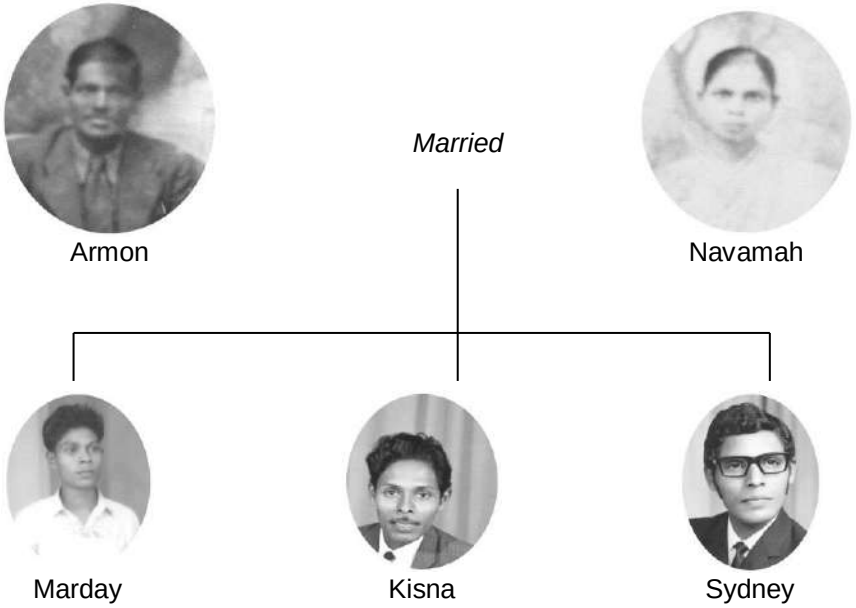
I looked at him, unsure if I should trust him and shared my feelings with him. In his attempt to console me, he put his arm around my shoulder and pulled me close to him. After a moment I decided to open up.

'I hate this life,' I said, 'I wish I could get away from here.'

There was a silence. He sat there studying me for a while.

'Tell me, son, where would you go?'

▼The House of Armon Chellen



Yes where would I go I reflected? I had no money. I could not answer his question. All I knew was that I desperately wanted a better life for myself. I wanted a better future. I did not want to spend my life working on building sites mixing cements, carrying bricks or washing sands. Let those who like this sort of work do it. I wanted to work in an office and maybe even become a writer one day. At the age of seventeen, I had already collaborated with a colleague and written a novella and got it printed. I can't recall selling any copies though! But I knew I had talent. I regularly entered a few quiz competitions run by a local newspaper called *Le Citoyen* and I was always the first or second of the best ten entries listed. So I had a fully functioning brain too!

When Mr. Maxime did not get a reply from me, he grabbed my right hand and after staring at it for a while he said:

'Son, don't be unhappy. *You may be eating brown bread now but one day you will eat white bread!* Isn't that wonderful? And when you do, wherever you might be, just send me a blanket so that I can keep warm.'

There was such conviction in his voice; it made me believe in what he was saying.

Cryptic as his words were, I sort of understood what he meant.

Was he psychic?

Was he seeing what I could not see?

Was a bright future waiting for me somewhere?

If Mr. Maxime was trying to lift my spirit up that day, he certainly succeeded. Either Mr. Maxime was a superb palm reader, or I was quite gullible. Whichever may have been the case, I did not lose hope. It is said, a person needs just three things to be truly happy in this world:

1. Something to do,
2. someone to love, and
3. Something to hope for.

Well, Mr. Maxime gave me the last one; it was up to me to find the first two. ✍

In December 2003, (35 years after I have left my homeland), I revisited the island of Mauritius and went to Beau-Bois to have a lasting look at my birthplace. I was amazed to find the office building from where my father sat to pay the workers still standing proud. But the areas around it have changed almost beyond recognition. The beautiful palm trees that used to surround the building have also disappeared.

"It was time for my mum to write me a letter—her words long awaited, her voice missed. In the quiet encouragement of my brother Marday and his gentle wife, she found the courage to begin. Behind the ink, I could feel their presence too: nudging, supporting, holding space for something sacred to unfold. That letter became more than paper—it was a bridge, a balm, a moment of grace stitched by three hearts."

◀ Here is an artist's impression of how the house in Beau-Bois once stood. Fifty-two years on, all that remains is an open field and the quiet canal that once carried the rainwater past its walls.▼

1965
Here is my mum, as she was, two years before I left Mauritius. As a young widow, she worked so hard to provide for us. She once said, "God may have taken her husband away but left her three 'Princes' to look after her. I wonder whether we've lived up to her expectations!

born: 25.06.1909
died: 26.02.1991

Syd and Gina
1970

Hello Sada,

I am impressed with the letter our dad wrote to Vel 60 years ago. As far as I know, he was a good-hearted and reliable person. I have plenty of souvenirs of him. Looking at his handwriting, it shows you to what extent he was intelligent. He was the most intelligent among his brothers and sisters. Not only his handwriting but he also wrote good French with very few mistakes, for that time. , I am proud and delighted to have seen again his beautiful handwriting from 60 years ago. I feel myself reliving the short ten years I spent with him. We can say that we three brothers are very lucky to survive this memorable passing. Very often I dream of him and wish God could allow me to see him in person for a while.

You know regarding the content of the letter I know most of what had happened. But what I didn't know is that our dad wrote to Vel informing him of the situation. And now having seen the letter, it makes me relive the moments. It is a big story and it is also a big pleasure for me to re-tell it to you. As you may know, at that time, Dad was a driver on the sugar estate. At that time a driver was regarded as a top and trustworthy man and he was the only reliable man for the Administrator of the establishment. Anything the workers needed they had to contact our dad who was known as "Armon Chauffeur" before they could see the administrator – Mr Leon Fleuriot. This made them jealous. One day our dad heard that some of them were planning to burn down our house. So our dad and some of his friends decided to keep watch. Fortunately, one day while dad and two of his friends were sitting inside the house taking a drink in the dark, they smelled something was burning. On investigation, they found that the back of the thatched house was on fire. With the help of his friends and others who later joined them, they managed to put out the fire. In the meantime, our mum was crying and she hurried to the back of the house and knelt under a lemon tree (a sacred place where she would usually go and pray), and cried her heart out to a saint called "Cateri". Our mum asked the saint to make the person who had set fire to our house show his face. Within 10 minutes the culprit came. Initially, he pretended he did not know anything, but then he started to shake. He finally broke down and confessed that he was a pyromaniac. He begged for forgiveness. Some of Dad's friends got carried away and decided to give him a good hiding whilst waiting for the police to come and take him away.

Days after that incident, Dad had to go to his barber to have a haircut. When we came out of the barber's shop, two brothers of the one who set our house on fire, cornered Dad and started to beat him with a wooden stick. As soon as they saw people approaching they ran away. A 'Muslim' friend, well-known to Dad, took him to Moka hospital for treatment.

I still remember how one day he came late, at about midnight. He tried to wake mum up to serve him food, but mum was too tired and didn't want to get up. I accompanied him in the kitchen and he fried some stag meat. We sat and ate together. This is still fresh in my mind. Things that will never come again. According to Hinduism, one day we shall meet in the second world. I hope it is true! Sada, it is very hard to accept that Dad has left us at the tender age of 50 without knowing what would become of us. We are fortunate to have at least almost known of the situation of our children […]

Regards
Marday Chellen
04.03.2007

My UNCLE ARMON

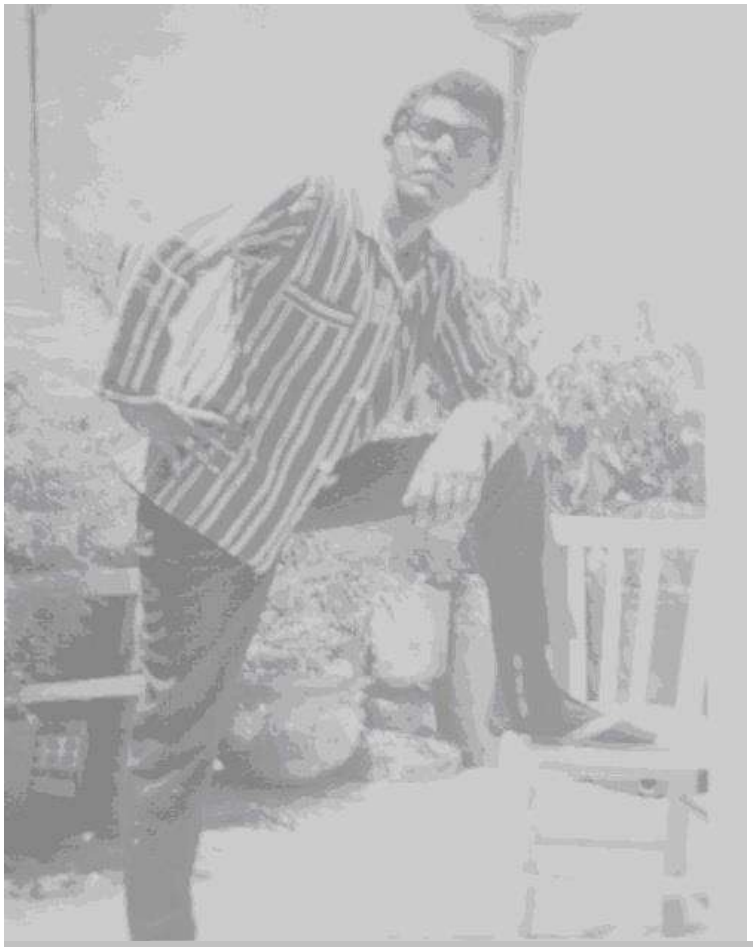
A testament as I remember him during my teenage years.
(By Vel Vencatachellum)

I close my eyes and I can see my uncle Armon, stepping out of his Austin car, dressed in his Khaki uniform and a Peek hat. That is how he used to arrive at my parents' place in Rose Hill, Mauritius. Every time he came to Rose-hill to pick up the medical prescriptions for his boss, Mr. Fleurot, the deputy administrator of the sugarcane plantation in Beau-Bois and the "Mont Desert sugar factory" at Saint Pierre, without fail he `would visit us. He would spend a few hours at our place. Sometimes he would bring my parents "bread Chou Chou" and other local vegetables that grow in Beau-Bois.

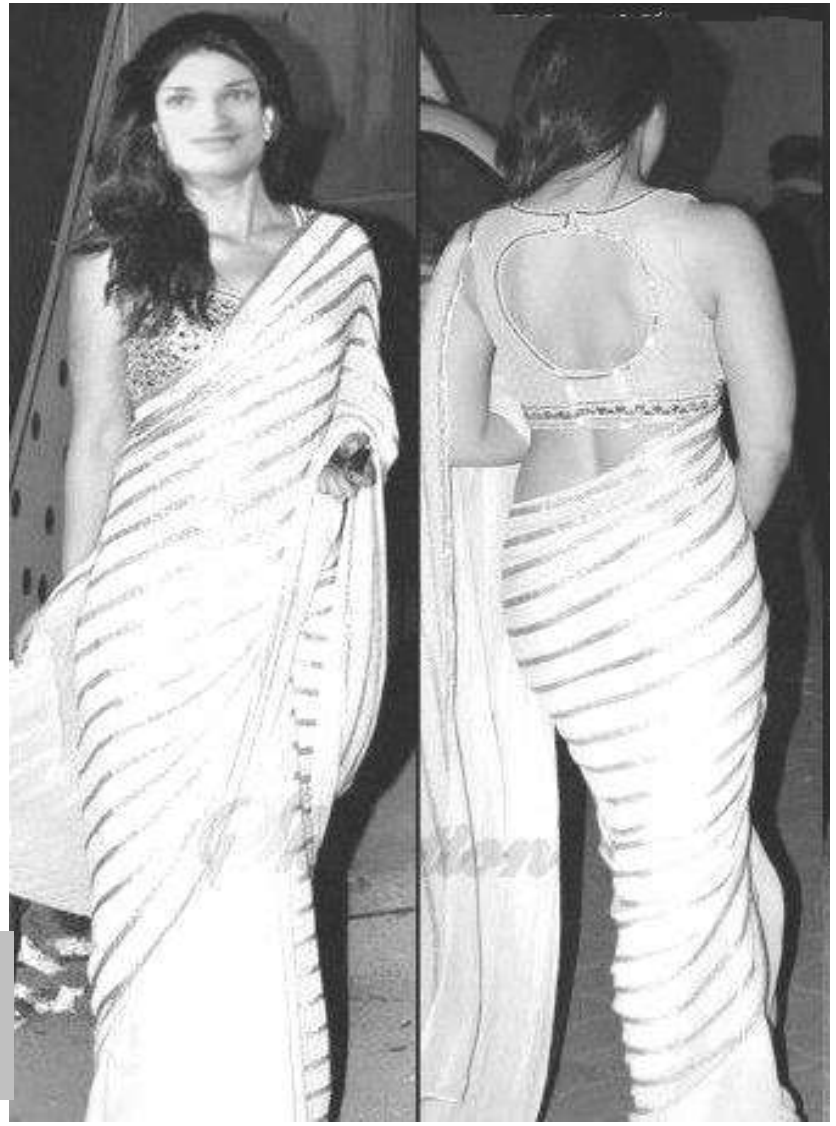
My brothers Siven, Rajen and I used to look forward to seeing Uncle Armon, especially during our school holidays. He would happily drive us to Beau-Bois to see the countryside and would encourage us to eat sugar cane to quench our thirst. My brothers and I enjoyed our drives in Uncle Armon's cute Austin car and he took great pleasure in accompanying us to the big lake at Beau-Bois, where we would watch the fish jumping up and down in the water. Sometimes he would catch some fish and when we got to his place, my auntie "Veeri", (as we used to call his wife) would cook us a nice meal.

My uncle lived in a thatch house. I can still picture it. The kitchen had a foyer with two rocks on each side and firewood burning in the middle. Spending time with my uncle and auntie was a great treat for us. As I grew older I became interested in mechanics. It was my uncle Armon who persuaded his boss to employ me as an apprentice at the Mont Desert sugar cane factory garage. As a learner mechanic, I received 50 cents a week. Uncle Armon kept a close check on me. He would regularly pop in the garage to have a chat with Mr. Jean - the Mechanic in charge - and find out how I was getting on.

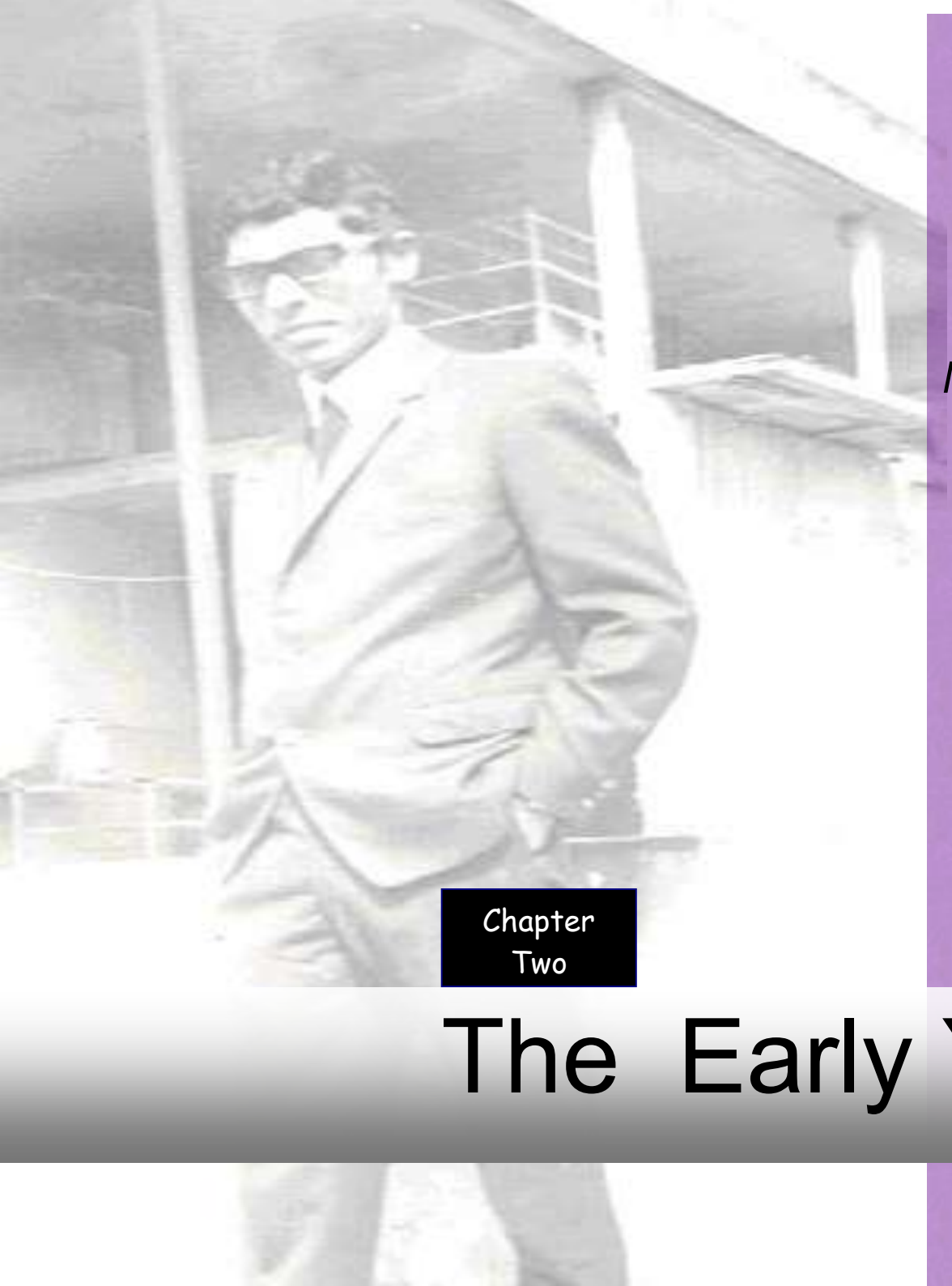
However, in 1946, I decided to join the army. Although that was the last time I saw my uncle Armon, my memories of him linger on.



Georgina Pauline Chellen emerges in virtual styling as a figure of quiet elegance and intellectual intrigue—a woman whose name carries the cadence of courtroom drama and the grace of literary invention. Imagined in a palette of deep sapphire and parchment gold, her silhouette is tailored yet fluid, echoing both discipline and creative freedom. Whether seated in her lounge at Maison Chamarel in Mauritius or gliding through the hushed corridors of a refined hotel, Georgina Pauline Chellen is styled to command attention—not with noise, but with narrative.



"Let your days be stitched with purpose, and your heart held by someone who sees the whole tapestry—who traces the golden threads of your triumphs, the faded seams of sorrow, and the quiet embroidery of hope. Let them marvel not just at the brilliance, but at the mending; not just at the pattern, but at the patience. For love, true love, is not dazzled by the design alone—it is devoted to the hands that keep weaving."



March 31st,1969

I was born in sunny Mauritius, where I lived and worked for 21 years. On March 3rd 1967 I left my homeland to study in South of Wales, UK.
In 1971 I settled in England in the county of Kent (popularly referred to as the garden of England).
Was it a happy settlement or was it the worst choice I could ever have made?

Chapter Two

The Early Years…

CHAPTER 2 – THE EARLY YEARS

▲ *Here I was 4 years old and still sucking my fingers!*

12 APRIL, 1945

Union Jack was adopted (1606). American Civil War started (1861). Roosevelt died in office (1945). David Cassidy was born and I was born

'Mother, why did you not bring me a sister?'

'I did' she replied sombrely, 'as a matter of fact I brought you two, but unfortunately God took them away.'

Who am I?

It was just before midnight on 12th April 1945, Navamah Chellen (née Narainen) gave birth to a baby boy at home in a small village called Beau-Bois (which is French for beautiful forest), on the exotic island of Mauritius.

The baby's father, Armon Chellen was a chauffeur with a private firm. Of course, I'm only quoting this from hearsay. I was too young to recall such a momentous event as my entry to this world. I was the fourth of five children. On my birthday the world was at war for the second time and a violent cyclone was causing havoc on the island. The weather was so bad that my mother had to wait for two days before she could get to the registry office to record my arrival. Although I enjoyed the company of my two brothers, Marday and Kisna, I always wanted a little sister. Once I said to my mother:

'Mother, why did you not bring me a sister?'

Whilst hugging me she replied sombrely, 'I did. I brought you two, but unfortunately, God took them away.'

Then referring to my two brothers and me, she added, 'I am so lucky that God left me with three great princes to take care of me.'

My mother was my shaper, my comforter, my protector. As I was the last, it was natural that she gave me all the love she had left and that little bit more. However, I was not spoiled. I did not get away from her punishments when I had misbehaved. When I was being punished for something I had done wrong she would make sure the all neighbourhood knew about it. Although she was very strict with me, if anyone had tried to take advantage of me she would tear into them like a lioness. I have witnessed her doing battle with one of my aunties because she felt I had been mistreated. It was then that I knew she was not only my life giver, she was also truly on my side and I could count on her to be my saviour.

My mother was of the old school. Whenever adults were talking she would not let me participate. In her book, children were meant to be seen but not to be heard. I was groomed to be extra respectful to my elders and never to answer back, even though I may have been right. I was never allowed to address any of my elders by their names. The preferred terms were uncles or aunties. Hence everyone older than me was either an uncle or an auntie, regardless of whether they were related to me or not. So you can imagine I had a lot of them!

I am still trying to find out exactly where my mother was born, but based on hearsay it was in the town of Beau-Bassin. She was one of three sisters (actually one was half a sister) and a brother. After the death of her mother, all the siblings shared equally a huge portion of land which was bequeathed to them.

Today, as my mother's sisters and brother have passed away, their portions of

land have ended up in the hands of total strangers, making that huge piece of land which was a family land, now invaded by strangers.

I was christened Seringapatam Chellen, after an ancient fortress city (now called Srigangapatna or Srirangapatnam). My research revealed that the name is derived from a 12th-century temple dedicated to Sri Ranganatha Swami (the Hindu God Vishnu). I also discovered that the Seringapatam town was fortified in the 15th century and became the capital for the Muslim rajas of Mysore, Haidar Ali (c.1722 -1782) and his eldest son, Tipu Sultan (1753-1799). History has it that the Seringapatam city became the site of two of the most famous sieges of the Anglo-Mysore Wars (in 1792 and 1799). Delighted as I am to be the bearer of such a name, what my father failed to take into account is that it is quite a mouthful. Indeed, it drove my mother nuts to the point that she gave me the pet-name 'Sada', short for Sadasiven (the name of a Dravidian Saint).

Historically, my name has served as a fingerprint of life, and when in my twenties I decided to emigrate, I arrived in South Wales, I was amazed how quickly and unintentionally I acquired a new identity. My working colleagues decided to shorten my name further. They were tempted to call me 'Sad' or 'Sod', but they eventually settled for Syd. Soon afterwards whilst having lunch in the dining room at Cefn Coed Hospital, South Wales, a colleague introduced me to a young lady.

'Nice to meet you, Syd,' the lady said as we shook hands and added, 'Syd is short for Sydney, isn't it? Then, I will call you Sydney because I think it is nicer…'

Well, there you have it! As the great writer, Shakespeare himself once remarked, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell so sweet."✍

First five years

When I was born, I was living with my parents in the village of Beau-Bois. I do not ever remember having any birthday parties during my formative years. I never felt the sense of my importance surging up in me. There were no birthday cakes covered with sugar icing or candles for me to blow and make a wish, but I had the next best thing—a home.

It's amazing what our memory chooses to remember. I remember vividly the home we were living in at the time: It was a three-bedroom one-floor thatch house with an open veranda and a huge kitchen, which sat a few feet away from the house. I remember the flooring was red and the white wooden doors with a double row of glass panes running in the middle. Each room was fitted with a bed and a free-standing wardrobe. In one room there was a small table in the middle surrounded by chairs. It is funny how little things stick in your mind. The house was surrounded by woods and sugar cane fields. In my imagination, the wood looked and indeed still looms as large as the New Forest, composed of trees. It had a path winding through it and had everything that is connected with woods. Mystery, terror, secret delight, inaccessibility and distance… The path through the wood led out onto a public park covered with beautiful meadows, large collections of exotic fruit-bearing trees and streams.

Whenever there were heavy rains, the stream bordering our house would overflow, drowning anything in sight including our garden and paths. I remember spending delightful hours playing in the water with other local kids most of whom I do not remember their names. I can vaguely see their faces—one kid in particular. The reason his face haunts me is not because of his chubbiness but because I

once fought with him. I can still visualise how fun it was sitting in one of the canals whilst allowing the water current to carry me forward. At other times, I would go in the nearby sugar cane fields and quench my thirst extracting juices from a sugar cane stick or going into someone's field helping myself with delicious tropical fruits such like lychees, mangoes, guavas, peaches and so on; but it was not all fun as I had my moments of fear and there is nothing in life which is more fearful than fear itself. To experience fear when you are young and naive is unimaginable. Whilst I was busy helping myself with some strawberries, a voice shouted at me, angry and rough:

'Wot d'you think you're doing 'ere?

He was a bearded old man who had suddenly appeared from nowhere waving his walking stick at me. He seemed to me a giant of a man, angry and red-faced.

'Err…' No words came out of my mouth.

'Trespassing, that's what you're at. Get out of here, before I boil you alive,' he commanded.

Being only three years old I was naturally frightened. I did not stay around to be boiled. I ran home to an empty house. When I thought I was safe I turned round and saw him coming towards me. I went into the house and hid myself behind a wardrobe. I remember shaking like a leaf, breathing heavily. The old man searched for me, but fortunately, he did not find me and went away. I almost collapsed with relief. I was white and sick. Later that day I told my mother about it.

'Oh dear,' she said gently, 'you didn't think he meant to boil you, did you?

I nodded dumbly. I had visualised myself in a hot steaming cauldron on a fire, screaming. It was all deadly real to me.

My mother talked soothingly to me.

'He was not a nice man but I can assure you he did not mean it.'

To me this horrible old man meant it, and even now when I go into a field a slight tremor goes down my spine. From that day to this I have never known so real a terror.

My parents had a big peach tree in our garden full of lots of ripe peaches, but for some unknown reason, I was not allowed to touch them. To make sure I did not get tempted to help myself with a few when no one was looking, my two brothers told me that they had counted the number of peaches on the tree. I don't think they did, but like a stupid fool, I believed them. What they perhaps don't know, I helped myself with the bananas they had stacked away in the kitchen.

Life was happy at Beau-Bois. There was no electricity, and the only means of lighting the house was with little oil lamps. There was also no heating, but as Mauritius has only two seasons: Summer and winter, and winter being really like spring, it did not matter. ✍

My dad…

I saw very little of my father as he was always working. Being the only bread-winner, he had no choice, I guess. Sadly, that left me very little chance to interact with him. I do, however, remember that one day he came home and saw me crying. To dry away my tears he bribed me with a ten-cent coin. Although this particular coin is now out of circulation, I still can visualise its shape, and I may even have one stashed away in my private coin collection. The most chilling time was when I was taken to the Civil Hospital in Moka at 2 a.m. because my mother had received news that my father was dying. When we arrived, my father was delirious and talking nonstop. He hugged all of us one by one and then started talking to my eldest brother, Marday. He gave Marday a writing pad and told him to jot down what he was dictating. When he saw that my brother was not writing, he started shouting at him. I can only presume that my brother could not understand what my father was saying. As my father was delirious, his speech would have most likely been incomprehensible to anyone. The next time I saw my dad, he was lying in a coffin and was surrounded by relatives and friends. One by one they leaned forward and gave him the traditional farewell kiss on his forehead. When they were about to put the lid on the coffin my aunt Tanga Venkatasamy, overcome by grief, insisted on being allowed to plant yet another kiss on his forehead. The Caretaker obliged and then sealed the coffin. That may have been the last time I saw the face of my father as he appeared in flesh, but his image has remained with me and the few memories I have of him are my consolations, although I wish I had had him in my life for longer.

I do not remember grieving for him and this is most probably because death was

meaningless to me at that age. Now I can't stop yearning for his presence. Many a time, I have cried for his guidance and craved for his arms around me. It is hard to understand why God chose to leave me fatherless at such an early age. Unarguably, had my dad been around for longer, my life would have been that much richer and most probably different too. As I travel through this world, it is so ironic to see some children who are lucky to have their father around but for one reason or another, they do not appear to appreciate it.

With my father gone, there was only my mother left to provide for us. She relied heavily on my eldest brother for a source of strength and much-needed support. I was aware that money was always scarce. To make ends meet my mother would work long hours in the sugar cane fields and do other odd jobs! At one point, she started to farm a few cows to generate an income. Oh! Boy, looking after cows is hard work. Those who do it for a living have my unreserved admiration. As for me, I was grudgingly spending hours in various fields cutting and carrying grass from long distances to help feed the cows. Every dawn my mother would milk the cows and my brother Kisna and I would go from door to door selling the milk to a list of clients in the nearby villages. Then my mother decided to rear goats. She would buy them when they were young. Raise them and then sell them for a profit. She also had a chicken or two which provided eggs which could be sold. Then came the ducks… they quack here and quack there. They quack everywhere. For a brief period, we even had pigeons. When they took a look at me they flew away and never came back. ✍

Then came Xmas

Christmas is the supreme Festival, something never to be forgotten; Christmas stockings in bed, and loads of presents. It is meant to be a fun time for kids. For me, it was anything but fun. On Christmas day there was no present to open, no Christmas dinner, no glittering ornaments and lights, no oyster for starter, no roast turkey with roast potatoes, carrots, cauliflowers and beans or sirloin of beef or lamb for dinner, not even plum pudding or ice cream or similar dessert. That day was simply uneventful in our household!

I would notice the kids playing on the street showing off their Xmas presents. They would play Cowboys and Indians with their newly acquired toy guns and water pistols. To join in, I would use my forefinger or a dry stick as my gun. Some of the kids, especially those from well-to-do families, were very cruel. Some of them would laugh at me and even refuse to play with me. Often we ended up boxing each other.

Others, who were not so mean, would let me play with their toys.

I was green with envy. I could not understand why other kids had such beautiful toys and I did not. I was too young to appreciate that my mother could not afford to buy food or drink to celebrate Christmas, let alone toys for me to play with. I guess, even if I did appreciate the financial hardship my mother was experiencing, I probably would not have understood why some kids are born with a silver spoon in their mouth while others aren't that lucky. But now that I am older and wiser, I can see that having rich parents can sometimes be a disadvantage. Rich parents do not always breed grateful children. Talking from personal experience, the bond between children and rich parents is not always that strong.

My eldest brother saw his role as a father substitute. In many ways, he fulfilled his surrogate responsibility very well. I would say at times too well, especially on occasions when I wanted a big brother NOT a stand-in father. He did not believe in "wasting" money buying toys for me to play with at Christmas or New Year. He erroneously felt it was more beneficial to offer me books or other scholastic equipment. He wanted me to spend my time studying so that I could get a good education. Unfortunately, in his wisdom, he did not see play as an important and necessary form of education. To him, play was nothing but a waste of valuable time and opportunities. Whenever he saw me playing, he would chase me to my room and insist that I learn my multiplication tables, or do my 3Rs. Whilst I became very good at counting, I was lousy at establishing relationships and for a long period of time I had difficulty handling myself in a social group, or even defending myself, be it physically or verbally. When it came to the opposite sex I just did not know how to relate to them. For a long time, I shied away from girls not by choice but by necessity because I did not want them to ridicule me.

One Christmas Eve I was sleeping at one of my aunties' houses. During the night, Father Christmas came and left me a small toy car. It was made of cast iron. It was a two-seater with removable rubber wheels and no top. When I woke up the

next morning and saw it, it was the most beautiful thing that ever happened to me; such unbelievable joy, that for a moment I was unable to say a word. Hurray! At long last, I had a toy that was bought especially for me and it was mine. I needed, urgently, to be alone and come to terms with this incredible happiness. Needless to say, I spent many happy hours playing with it. Image of that toy car stuck in my mind. Fifty years later, whilst my wife and I were taking a walk we inadvertently stopped at a car showroom. On impulse, we went in. I saw a smart BMW Z3 sports convertible on display, and it immediately reminded me of a bigger version of the little toy car I had so many years ago. I told my wife I must have this car.

'Look at the price, we can't afford this,' she said.

'Sure we can. Besides I must have it.'

Before she could say another word, I had bought the car. People have commented that I am too old to be driving a sports car. That may well be true. Maybe I am trying to relive my young years. Whatever the case, I don't care. They can just eat their heart out whilst I continue to enjoy what is left of my life. ✍

The festival of lights

However, there were happy days, especially during celebrations like Diwali (or Diwali or Deepavali).

Although in later years, after the death of my father, my mother became a Christian, she was born a Tamil. She followed the Tamil religion and worshipped the Hindu Gods. My religious views were quite open. I would happily pray in a Hindu church as I would in a Christian one. For me, God lives in everyone and you can worship Him anywhere.

During this festival of life my mother, with a little help from me, would clean, and whitewash our home. She would draw elaborate designs on the floor with coloured powder and then decorate the courtyards, windows and roofs with little clay lamps to welcome Lakshmi Mata, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. To commemorate the day, she would buy us new clothes and we would send and receive lots of cakes to our relations, friends and immediate neighbours. It was feast time!

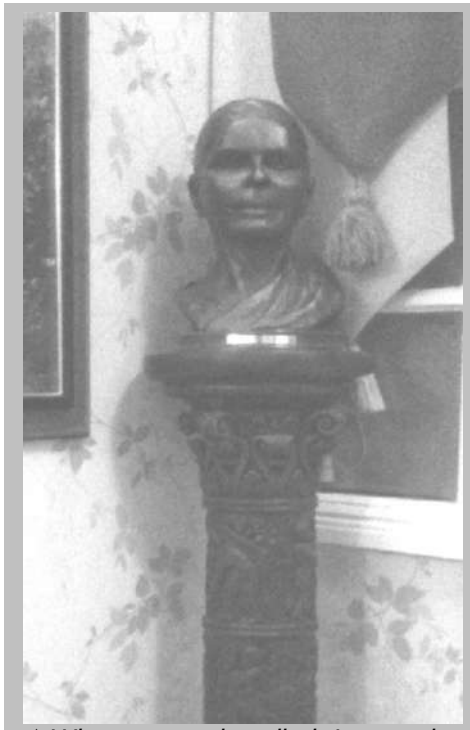
But oh! How I hated it when my mum would insist that we get up at 5 a.m. to have a shower! Well sort of, because until later on, we did not really have a shower or even a bathroom. What we had was more like a private corner situated behind the kitchen. Standing there, were three panels (roughly 5 feet tall) made of raffia and no roof, enough to provide sufficient privacy. My mother would soap me from head to toe then pour a bucket of water over my head. As I felt the almost cold water showering my head and dripping down my face I would gasp for breath. In vain I would ask my mum to stop. She was determined to clean me up so that the goddess of light would enter our house and bless my soul. When my mother was done with me, I would stand there freezing to the bone, wishing that Diwali never came again.

Once the feast was underway, I would devour the cakes prepared for that special occasion. I do not remember being ill at Diwali. I had a splendid stomach indeed. During that period there would be enough cakes in the house to feed an army. After the pleasurable inertia of Diwali, I would feel I have had enough cakes to last me a lifetime. Yet this did not stop me wishing that every day was Diwali, a really splendid day, and one to be remembered till next year, when Diwali came again. ✍

Schooling…

At the age of five, I started elementary school situated nearby. It was a fifteen-minute walk from where we lived. I do not remember its name but I do remember the day they decided to pull it down. The flooring of the school was covered with floorboards which had lots of cracks. Sometimes whilst sitting at the desk, the children's crayons would fall on the floor and disappear through the cracked planks. Many children and I managed to recover some of the many lost crayons and a few coins when the school was pulled down. We were all transferred to a new elementary school situated at L'Avenir, Moka. Overall, it was a much better school with a huge football field. The classroom was well-fitted with individual desks.

I do not quite remember the distance but I know it took me almost an hour or so to walk to it, as there was no transport available on that route. However, it was possible to get there quicker by taking a shortcut through the sugar cane fields. To make the journey feel less tiresome and more fun, my brother Kisna and I would



▲*When my mother died, I wanted to immortalize her. I had this bust specially made to keep her memory alive. The statue is made of bronze and watches over my family and I in the Hallway of my house.*

Born:
26.06.1909
Died:. 26.02.1991

▲Here I am sucking my finger with my eldest brother Marday standing behind me.
My dad sitting down on my left,
then my brother Kisna standing next to my mum, Navamah.
Although my mum became a widow at a very young age, out of respect for my dad and us, my mum never remarried. For her it was strictly one man, one marriage and one life, in line with our culture.

My mum with my niece, Devegi on her lap. It survived several cyclones including the naughty cyclone Carol. Two years after I had left Mauritius it was torn apart by a later cyclone. That was to be my inheritance. After my mother died, I used the land to build me a three-bedroom concrete house, as it was her wish that I should do so and keep the land in the family. ▼

My dad
ARMON CHELLEN
Born:20.09.1900
Died:21.07.1950

One more kiss...▲
Here is my auntie Tanga Venkatasamy. She made quite an impression on me when at the funeral of my dad; she insisted that the lid of my dad's coffin is removed so that she could plant a lasting kiss on his forehead. In the picture with her (on her left is my brother Marday.

Here lies Armon Chellen
(Born: 21.7.1900-
Died: 22.7.1950)

Regrettably, he left behind his wife & three sons, the oldest being on 12 yrs old.
R.I.P.

V367FHR

V=**V**ictory
367=the number of days it took me to acquire the money to pay for it.
FHR= **F**or **H**is **R**oyal.

After years of anticipation, I finally got my hands on the ultimate status symbol—a true head-turner. When my nephew Doraj visited in May 2007, his first reaction was, "Don't you feel ashamed driving it?" But how could I possibly feel ashamed behind the wheel of such a stunning machine? It's not just a car—it's a statement.

"Driving it for the first time was surreal. I remember the way heads turned as I cruised down the street, the subtle envy in passing glances, and the quiet thrill that bubbled up inside me. It wasn't just about luxury—it was about arriving at a moment I'd dreamed of, and finally owning it unapologetically."

rendezvous with some friends at an agreed location and we would make our way to school together. To get there for 9 a.m., we would leave home around 7.30 a.m. On our journey, we would often fool around with each other. Sometimes we would carry a ball with us, kicking and chasing it along the way. We would use all kinds of tricks to make the journey less painful. Usually, by the time we got to school, I would be worn out. That was the beginning of my daily 'penitence'!

I remember arriving at school one day and discovering that the teacher was dishing out laxatives to the class. Of course, I did not know what the tablet was meant to do. I thought they were sweets, so I gladly opened my mouth and allowed the teacher to drop one on my tongue. After a while, we were all released to go home early. I did not know why but it soon became apparent. Being able to walk home through the sugar cane fields became quite handy as controlling our anal sphincter muscles became almost an impossibility.

As school was very far from home, like other mothers, my mum would usually give me a packed lunch to take with me. Some days though, there was nothing to take. At lunchtime (usually at noon), a bell would ring and the teacher would ask us to clear our desks and begin our lunch. As part of her curiosity, the teacher would go round and see what we were eating. One day she noticed I had nothing to eat. She found someone willing to share his food with me. The trouble was, it was cooked 'brèdes songes'. This is a plant that grows in thick, luxuriant clumps along the banks of Mauritian rivers and streams, and in marshy areas. In the Caribbean region, this plant is known as either callaloo or elephant's ear. The leaves, which can grow to be 2 to 3 feet long, are somewhat heart-shaped.

Several varieties of "Songes" exist. Of the two that are edible, one type has shiny dark green leaves and burgundy-tinted stems, whilst the other has leaves and stems of the palest green. When the first type is cooked, it looks dark, pulpy and revolting enough to put anybody off their appetite. But that teacher was determined that I was going to have some food in me that day! After that day, 'brèdes songes' was definitely off my menu for life.

After my father had died, around my 6th birthday, my mother having acquired a little piece of land in the town of Beau-Bassin, bequeathed to her by her mother, she had somehow managed to build a four-bedroom thatch house on part of the land and cultivate the rest, thus procured for herself and her children the means of subsistence. Having taken us to live there, the change of location brought me closer to some of my cousins, nieces, aunties and uncles whom I'd hardly seen before. This also meant a change of primary school.

Although, like other kids of my age, I did play truant on occasions, going to school was fun. On the whole, I enjoyed my school days and I performed fairly well in most subjects. I enjoyed the school social activities. For my friends and me, it was the sport and game rather than the education that mattered in our lives. Whenever the bell rang to signal a school break, my friends and I would rush to the school playground to play with our marbles. If we had no marbles, we would play hide and seek with the girls. Usually, the boys would do the seeking. You will just have to guess what the prize was because I am not telling.

Even though I have always liked milk (especially fresh one), I hated the free milk I received at school. I hated even more the various injections and pills, especially the regular Senekot pills we were forced to take. Every morning, I had to line up with my mug to collect that wretched milk. To make sure I swallowed my pill, the teacher would fill my mug with milk and insist that I place the pill in my mouth in front of her and wash it down with the milk. Now and then, though, I succeeded in hiding the pill under my tongue and I would hurry to the water tap to spit it out on the pebbles whilst pretending to be washing my mug.

Singing "God save the Queen" was another ritual we all had to sing every morning as we lined up in the schoolyard in neat rows. The punishment for not knowing the words or for singing out of tune was one hundred lines or kneeling in the middle of the school courtyard with a cone on your head. Cleanliness, tidiness, and discipline were hallmarks of that school. We would be paraded in the schoolyard and the headmaster with his teachers would approach every one of us to examine our scalp, ears, nose, mouth, and fingernails.

My 4th class teacher was a beautiful half-cast Chinese woman. Despite some of my faults, she had a soft spot for me. After all, I was one of her able pupils. I would never forget that day when I turned up to school late, expecting to be pun-

ished but instead I found her in a state of jubilation brought about by the exam results for her class. She was so delighted with the 100% pass rate that she decided to treat us all with an extra glass of that wretched milk. That was enough to tempt me not to work so hard in the following year. Not really! After a long day at school, I did not like going home to study again. I loathed homework. But my brother, Marday, was always on my tail. Contrary to popular belief, for him ''all work and no play makes Jack a *good* boy''. He made it his business to press me very hard. Fair due to him, on reflection he had his heart in the right place and he almost always did his best to help me improve myself. But I do wish he did not use his hands on me as much as he did! Like all kids and teenagers, I did not always appreciate his help and sometimes failed to respond in the manner he wanted. I must admit that was my failing, not his. ✍

Time to learn…

In his attempt to help me increase my vocabulary, every day my brother would select 10 words from the dictionary for me to learn. When he had checked my comprehension and my ability to spell them correctly, he would give me a further ten and so on. I guess the exercise did me some good. He would make time to check my knowledge and understanding of a variety of subjects. If I failed to give him the correct answers, he would punish me severely, using either his hands or a ruler. I can't count how many rulers he had broken on me. Sometimes my mum would get angry with him and ask him to ease off. Then they would end up arguing over me.

At the time, I was quite fearful of him though deep inside I always felt he was doing it for my good. Thus, I never felt any resentment toward his methods. I trusted that he had my best interest at heart, though I did wish it didn't hurt so much when he felt a slap across the face or a clip behind the ears was needed to instil some good sense in me!✍

College life…

My 1st Primary School

Here I am on December 12th, 2003 visiting my first primary school, which I attended when I was 4 years old. It is situated at L'Avenir, Moka, Mauritius.

▶*my wife Gina and my brother Kisna talking to the current Headmaster.*

Mohunlall Mohit Govt. School at L'Avenir, Moka, Mauritius.

▼*Syd*

▼*My brother Marday*

I did succeed in completing my primary education and went on to pursue a secondary education. In my days, secondary education had to be paid for and only parents who had money could afford to do so. The fee would vary depending on which college you attended. Somehow my mother and brothers found the money and sent me to a college in a town called Belle-Rose. It was a new college called "University College" owned by a guy called Kamaya. The college was about 15 miles away from home. Although there were buses, I had to walk. Occasionally my brother Kisna would dip into his pocket and give me twenty-five cents. As the bus fare in those days cost fifteen cents one way, I would use the bus to go to college, spend the remaining ten cents on ice cream or sweets and then walk home after the lessons. Sometimes when I noticed that my brother Kisna had forgotten to chain his bike, I would pinch it to ride myself to school.

As pocket money was a rare luxury for me, during school breaks I would envy the other students when they were buying and eating cakes after cakes. One day I saw a particular classmate buying his fifth cake, and I plucked up the courage to ask him to give me five cents so that I could buy myself a cake too. Until I die I will keep hearing him tell me: "Sorry mate I have only got fifty cents left to put in the Juke-box." It was at times like that when I would feel so miserable and I would curse being an underprivileged lad.

My first year at college was great. I detested chemistry classes (mostly because the teacher was lousy!); but I thoroughly enjoyed Mathematics, particularly Trigonometry. As the first year was drawing to an end, I overheard my brother hinting that the family could not afford to continue paying the college fee. This began to worry me. Oh dear they are going to cut off my education and send me to work. Fortunately, Lady Luck decided to shine on me. Having passed all the End-of-year exams and obtained top grades, the Principal of the college had chosen to introduce a scheme to reward good achievers. As a result, I was allowed to proceed to Year II as a non-fee-paying student. For four successive years, I managed to maintain the top position in my class. I knew that was the only chance I had to stay at college. Two teachers, Mr. Goolabkhan, whose speciality was Maths and the other (whose names unfortunately escape me) specialised in English language, went out of their way to help me with extra tuition free of charge. I particularly loved learning from Mr. Goolabkhan and enjoyed his lessons on Trigonometry.✍

Testing time

Having reached the end of my 5th year at college, it was time to pay to sit the

Government Primary School
Located at
Dupont Avenue, Beau-Bassin, Mauritius.

◀ In this building I received English lessons from a teacher who took a delight in disciplining us with bamboo sticks. The teaching was good. Every morning before entering our classroom we were lined-up in the school ground for inspections. Anyone found to have dirty nails or hair, or was untidy in any way was punished or sometimes sent home. Princess Margaret visited this school as part of her world trip in the 60's. I completed my Primary Education and obtained my Primary School Leaving Certificate.

SC/GCE O'level (General Certificate of Education). The Examination fee was 60 rupees, which represented one month of my mother's wage. When I asked my mother for the money, seeing how distraught I was, she handed me 35 rupees (which was over half of her monthly wage). After explaining my situation to the father of a friend by the name of Gokool, he decided to contribute 20 rupees. That still left me 5 rupees short.

The final date for making payment had arrived and I was still searching for the shortfall. I turned up at college that day and asked everybody I knew to lend me five rupees. None of them could help me. Finally feeling so exhausted and despondent, I sat down under a tree (see picture on previous page) in the college yard looking a wreck. Once again, Lady Luck came to my rescue. Ten minutes before the Registration office was due to close, a guy suddenly offered me the much-needed five rupees. He was the last person on earth I'd expected help from, only because we were always competing against each other. God does work his magic in mysterious ways. That day I must have run faster than a cheetah. Crossing the football field at the speed of light, I reached the Registration Office just in time to pay the cashier my exam fee.

I never met that guy again until Christmas 1998 when unknowingly I found myself on his doorsteps at Seven Sisters, London, UK. That Christmas I happened to be spending it with my cousin Rajen Vencatachellum and his wife Nigee who lived at Seven Sisters. Nigee's brother was there too. He decided to drive me to meet a relative of his who lived nearby. I had no idea who I was going to meet. When we arrived there, I was stunned when I saw the guy who lent me that five rupees standing at the door.

It is difficult to put into words how I felt at that moment. We gave each other a big hug and sat down for a while sipping a glass of whisky and recollecting our

►I believe in miracles!

This is Eden College, Rose Hill. Owned by Mr. Balgobin. I spent one year here. In December 2003, I visited Mauritius. Although the college appears to have shut down, I was delighted to find that the tree was still there, standing proudly in the college ground. If this tree can talk it will say this is where I was sitting down (in 1965) feeling sorry for myself because I did not have enough money to pay my examination fee. Magically, a student who happened to be standing near it learnt of my predicament and decided to offer me the much-needed five rupees.

A museum piece. Served me well.

The miracle tree in the ground of Eden college

	Mauritian Schools and Colleges I attended
1949	Monhunlall Mohit Government School, Cartier Millitaire, Nr. St. Pierre.
1950	Government Primary School, Dupont Street, Beau-Bassin
1960	University College, Belle Rose
1965	Eden College, Rose Hill

	UK Schools & HE Institutions I attended
1967	Cefn Coed School of nursing, South Wales
1974	West School of nursing, Kent
1979	Bristol Polytechnic
1981	University of Wales
1993	University of Kent

University College, Mauritius

Typing my way to success

Although it took me a long time to realise it, the real excitement of being a male is to grow up and become a man—preferably a successful one. When you are, the

whole world becomes your oyster. You do not need to look for the woman; she will come looking for you. And when she does you will be a cut above the rest, the envy of other fellow men. Armed with that belief I began to feel responsible for my actions and what I could attempt successfully. I separated the things I was no good at and that I must not waste time over. I knew that I was not quick-witted; I must give myself time to look at a problem carefully before deciding how I would deal with it. As it so happened, living near me was a nice family by the name of Goomanee. Mr. Goomanee was a Prison Officer and he had three daughters and a son. I was friendly with one of his daughters. One day I went to visit her at home and I remember clearly she was sitting in her veranda using a small portable typewriter. Her father was sitting there too and I was talking to him, but I guess he could see me constantly looking at his daughter typing and saw my eyes were full of interest. When the daughter had finished what she was doing she proceeded to pack the typewriter away.

'No let your friend type a bit,' he told his daughter.

'Okay.' And she passed over the typewriter to me.

'But I have never used a typewriter before,' I said feeling embarrassed.

'Here is your chance young man. Just do what you saw my daughter doing,' he said encouragingly.

I started to type using my two forefingers and I noticed him watching me with a grin on his face. I was so glad to have been given the opportunity and that day I spent hours typing and I loved it.

Just before I left, Mr. Goomanee seeing how happy I was for the experience he said, 'anytime you want to use the typewriter just come here.'

With a huge smile on my face, I replied, 'I will. Thank you, sir.'

When I got home I told my mother I would like a typewriter and my brother Marday overheard me. He happened to know someone selling a second-hand 'Underwood' typewriter and he went to buy it for me. I started to teach myself typing. After reaching the magical speed of 40 words per minute, I decided to apply for a secretarial job at the army barracks in a town in Mauritius called Vacoas. I was over the moon when I was called for an interview. On the day of the interview, I had arrived promptly and I was standing in front of a tall gentleman.

Just before I was due to leave Mauritius, I found myself sitting in this office with my boss, K. Sunassee, typing all his correspondence. The Exercise took one whole week.

We walked into an office and the first thing he said to me was that he needed to watch me complete a typing exercise.

I grinned. 'That's fine with me, sir.'

When he saw me typing with two fingers, he was not amused. Although I was able to deliver the typing speed required, he said he wanted a touch-typist.

'Oh,' I said.

He could see the disappointment on my face. He advised me to enrol on a touch typing course. That day I went straight to the public library and borrowed a touch-typing book.

After a year or so unemployed, I managed to find a job as a correspondence typist in a tourist shop. Of course, by then I had mastered touch-typing – well sort of! The boss was Rt. Hon. K. Sunassee, M.P., who was also the chief whip of the Labour Party ruling the country at the time. On some occasions, I would double-

back as his secretary. My monthly salary was 140 rupees. Even though that was not a lot of money for my needs, as soon as I was paid I would come home and give my mum 10 rupees. However, by the time the month was over, I had finished borrowing 20 rupees from her. In a small way, I tried to show my mum that having sponged off her for so long, it was my turn to give.

It was in that very store that one morning I turned up for work and found a carbon copy of a letter that someone had left behind after using the typewriter in my office, a small area located at the back of the store. The author of that letter had written to a hospital in Wales requesting nurse training. That got me thinking. It is said that nothing ventured, nothing gained. On impulse, I decided to make a similar application to the same hospital. To my surprise, I got a positive response and within three months I was packing my bags to leave Mauritius much to the astonishment of everyone I knew. When I handed my boss my resignation letter and told him that I was leaving his firm to go abroad and study for a qualification in nursing, he grinned and said:

'Do you know that there are about 400 people on the waiting list?'

To which I cockily replied, 'I don't care whether 4000 people are waiting, call it jumping the queue if you like, I have been accepted and I am leaving in three days.'

At this point, I showed him the letter I had received. He read it, fell back into his chair and said, 'How did you manage that?'

His brother Mootoovel cut in and said, 'We have lost him…'

When later on I'd arrived in South Wales U.K, the Chief Male Nurse (CMN) told me that another guy from my country also applied for training, but he had decided to take me instead because the other one was over qualified, and added, 'depending on how you behave will determine whether or not I take anymore students from your country.' ✍

Left over…

Being the lastborn in a family has its advantages. But the biggest drawback though was that I always ended up inheriting most of my clothes and shoes from my two brothers. I was not allowed to wear long trousers as those were reserved for grown-ups. My mother would use the worn-out long trousers belonging to my two brothers and convert them into shorts. She would use the leftover clothes to patch the holes in the seat of the trousers. The patches would not always be of the same material or colour. I would walk around wearing those shorts looking and feeling like a clown. Girls can be very cruel. Well some of them. Sometimes they would look at me and have a good laugh at my expense.

As soon as I'd got my first paid job, I decided to spruce myself up. I recall using most of a month's wage to buy the material for a suit. Although one of my brothers was a tailor, I wanted to pay for it to be done. So I waited for the following month's wage to have the money to pay him the first instalment for the trousers to be made. By the time I had the money to pay for him to make the coat, the trousers were already worn out. Making ends meet on 140 rupees was quite a challenge.

Looking back, four weeks after I'd landed in Wales, I entered the men's department of Burton Men's Wear and requested the salesperson to dress me from head to toe. That day I blew £80 (four weeks of my wages). On my way out of the shop, I saw my reflection in the shop window. For the first time in my life, I'd felt like a new man.

I guess the main reason for me inheriting clothes from my brothers and others was economic, but it is a fact that many older women believe that children do not warrant expensive new clothing, as they are not yet social adults; such spending is much more appropriate once the child has grown up and married. However reused clothes have a good sentimental value; they fold young children into the family by draping them in the fabrics of their siblings, imbuing them with the good qualities of their elders as they grow up.✍

The Second Tamil Scout

Whilst I was growing up in Mauritius, my brother Marday heard of the good work being achieved by the Second Tamil Scout Literary Club and registered me as a member. I doubt if I would have ever left Mauritius if I'd never entered that club. It was as a member of that club that I got the opportunity to practice speak-

ing English and French. All membe
usually on Fridays, in a rented build
ous literary activities and competiti
divided we fall". An aphorism which
ple pay attention to it.

Rose-Hill, 1963, *for Parama*

A borrowed stage, a borrowed name,
Garigou's badge, my claim to fame.
You, **Parama**, with quiet grace,
opened the door to my workplace.

Not just a role, but a turning key—
your kindness still walks ahead of me.
From scout to stage, from friend to guide,
your light still lingers at my side.

You saw the spark before I knew,
and cleared a path I could walk through.
A single gesture, softly made,
became the bridge my future laid.

Parama Valaydon (left) and Sydney S. Chellen standing to attention.

One of the club activities was to encourage members to take part in organised competitions. It is my understanding that the club closed down when the founder members went their separate ways to pursue their careers. However, fond memories of it remain. How could I ever forget 1963, September 15th to be exact? I was finally chosen to appear in the role of L'Agent Garigou (Policeman Garigou) in a stage French play entitled, "Le Commissaire Est Bon Enfant" being shown at the British Council, Rose-Hill, Mauritius. It was my first opportunity to show my acting skills. Appearing with me was my friend, Parama Valaydon, who was of course playing Commissaire (Police Commissioner). He was in fact the person who paved the way for my first job at K. Sunassee Ltd.

Another area that interested me a lot was participation in debates. On one occasion I was asked to chair a debate at the Youth House Council. I was excited and

"Some ask to hear your thoughts just to shake your footing. Stand firm—and let their handshake be your quiet victory."

Youth Council Belle Rose

petrified at the same time. It was too good an opportunity to pass over. I forget what the topic was about, but I will never forget when a member of the audience stood up and insisted on hearing my thoughts on the subject. I got the feeling he was not interested in hearing my thoughts as he aimed to put me on the spot and embarrass me. I am glad he did not succeed and he was sorely disappointed. He later came and shook my hand. ✍

The girl next door…

In my day, forming and opening friendly relationships with the opposite sex was mostly a "NO, NO" area. Parents kept a very close eye on their daughters.

Nevertheless, at the age of sixteen, I fell in love. It was a shattering and wonderful experience. The object of my passion was a beautiful Muslim girl. Black-haired and brown-eyed, she appealed to all my romantic instincts. She could have had no idea of the emotions she aroused. My extreme shyness caused me to go in the opposite direction if I saw her coming giving her the impression that I dislike her.

Dislike her! How little anyone knew. When I think of it now, how supremely satisfying early love can be. It demands nothing—not a look nor a word. It is pure magic. Sustained by it, one walks on air, creating in one's mind heroic occasions on which one will be of service to the beloved one. Climbing the highest mountain or diving in the deepest sea to save her; shielding her from all fatal ills. Each time I saw her, inside my head a glorious exultation swirled in extravagant fancies. Months later the mystery object of my desire became a bride and I lost out. For a short while her image persisted and then dwindled. Love vanished, never to return until years later, when I came to adore hopelessly a gorgeous young Maltese nurse across the seas. In life, when it comes to a woman, there are two great mistakes a man can make: The first is to declare your love for her too early and the second is to declare your love for her too late.

In between, though there were two others. For the sake of anonymity, I will refer to them as *Bijou* and *Ida* respectively.

Bijou was the girl next door. Most of the time, she would wear those sexy Salwars and cover her face and mouth with a see-through veil with the tail thrown over her left shoulder. She had such unforgettable intoxicating eyes.

Now, you must be a fool to want to mess around with a girl like that who had a mean butcher with a prison record for a dad. But as the saying goes, when love strikes it sweeps you off your feet and makes fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

Bijou and I would rendezvous at a secret location as often as we could. But when you are in love you want the whole wide world to know. Aren't I Right? No sooner was our secret out, all hell broke loose. I became a wanted man. Why? You may well ask. Well, in Western culture, romantic love is seen as a necessary prelude to choosing a spouse and parents are usually unable to control with whom their child falls in love. But in Eastern societies, romantic love is recognised by parents for the passion it is and is subjected to varying degrees of control. Such love is only encouraged to follow rather than precede the choice of a spouse.

Being of Tamil origin I knew the rules of romancing with the opposite sex and the disastrous consequences that were likely to follow if I should step out of line. Somehow, I just had an affinity for Arabic girls. However, besides the fact that they were off limits, getting close to them was not that easy because they were usually kept out of reach. As the saying goes: "where there is a will there is always a way!" I had the uncontrollable will to chase the forbidden fruit. But when the pressure to abandon that relationship became too great, I chickened out, promptly cut off and ran.

Then came: 'Ida', yet another Muslim woman. She knew exactly how to drive me crazy. The constraints were such that it was almost impossible for me to be alone with her, let alone hold her. To complicate matters, she was already married to a man who had a mistress on the side. Eventually, my mother did find out what I was up to and needless to say, she went berserk with me. She knew the dangers that faced me and could not understand why I was acting so stupidly. The force, the fuel, the elixir was too strong for me to exercise self-control. Once the husband became suspicious and started to look for me, I knew the game was up. The relationship lasted for a few months then fell apart.

Ida was very caring. She would enjoy feeding me and giving me all sorts of presents. Although she was a Muslim woman she would put aside her dress code and wear sleek silk sarees. We would take different buses and meet in a town called Port Louis. Sometimes we would go for a stroll in the park, where we felt we could be alone. Unknown to us the trees had eyes! We would stand next to the pond in the park, staring at our reflections in the water and make silly remarks. She was such a bundle of fun to be with. But, alas, no sooner had it begun, the dream had to end. We both knew it.

Amazingly, thirty-five years after I had left Mauritius, my brother Marday visited me in England. I was shocked to learn that while he was shopping at the market in a town called Rose-Hill, a gang of butchers mistook him for me and nearly killed him. He told my mum about it but felt he received little sympathy. He ended up quarrelling with my mum over the incident and consequently, he left home with his wife and children. I vaguely remember him leaving, but I had never before known the reason.

Love and marriage in traditional eastern culture involve issues of caste, dowry, the impact on the fortunes and prospects of the remaining unmarried sons and daughters of the families concerned and the fact that the new wife is expected to move in with her husband's family. Even if Ida was not married, I knew there was

no way that my mother and brothers would have accepted her as my choice of bride. As destiny would have it, I left Mauritius and the distance just killed the love we had for each other.

Somehow, in our case, absence did not make the heart grow fonder. Just as well, because months later I met a wonderful Maltese girl from Qormi, Malta. We got to know each other and fell in love and founded our relationship based on a mixture of Eastern and Western values.

Whoever said West is west, East is east and the trains shall never meet is, in our case, clearly wrong. ✍

My singing idols

Until I had reached the age of 17 my interest was in Indian music. I spent hours listening to all the songs that appeared in the films 420 and Nagin, even to this day. My iPhone has the entire collection. Then I began to develop an interest in English and French songs. Amongst my singing idols were the French singer François Hardy and British-born 11-year-old pop singer Helen Shapiro.

My interest in Helen started in a rather strange way. I can still picture that afternoon as I was walking with my cousin Indrassen Vencatachellum in the high street in Rose Hill, Mauritius. We were on our way to the movie and we could hear the song 'Walking Back to Happiness' coming from the jukebox in one of the shops. The most appealing part of the song was its deceptive beginning. When we got to the cinema, I heard the song again and again. I was fascinated that an 11-year-old girl had such a mature voice and could sing that well but little did I know at the time that one day I would come face to face with Helen. Yes, here I was 35 years later sitting in the front row at the Hazlet theatre, in Maidstone town, Kent, with my wife and son David being entertained by the one and only Helen Shapiro. When she opened the show by singing *Walking Back to Happiness*, I could not believe I was listening to her live.

As a young kid growing up on a far-away island you tend to fantasise about your screen idols, but you never really believe that dreams can and do come true, sometimes! Sadly, my momentous occasion was quickly spoiled when Helen switched from pop songs to jazz. At that point, I started to lose interest in the show and began to switch off. Helen was not amused when she spotted me looking uninterested. Having noticed my displeasure she remarked: '*What have I got to do to please you*?'

Having admired Helen for years, I just wanted her to fill me up with all her pop songs. Jazz has never really been my cup of tea. ✍

Real name: Helen Shapiro
Birth date: 28th Sept. 1946
Birth place: Bethnal Green, London.

Helen Shapiro is remembered today by youth pop culture buffs as the slightly awkward actress/singer in Richard Lester's 1962 debut feature film: It's Trade Dad.

However, from 1961 until 1963 Helen was England's teenage pop music queen.

At one point selling 40,000 copies daily of her biggest single 'Walking back to happiness,' during a 19-week chart run.

A deceptively young 14 year-old girl when she was discovered. Shapiro had a rich, expressive voice properly sounding like the property of someone twice as old, and she matured into a seasoned professional very quickly.

"Let no man, no voice, no fleeting moment of arrogance make you feel small. If they try to diminish you, do not let their shadow become your silence. You were not born to shrink—you were born to shine, to speak, to stand. When someone attempts to belittle your light, do not waste your breath in anger. Instead, rise in grace. Let your dignity be your answer, your brilliance the rebuttal. Show them—not with fury, but with the full force of your truth—who you are, and what you carry. You are not defined by their gaze, but by your own unwavering flame."

THE TURNING POINT *1967*

My three minutes of…

When I joined the 2nd Tamil Scout Literary Club, I never knew that it was going to be the beginning of a big turning point in my life that followed. On my first day of membership, after having welcomed me, the chairman unexpectedly asked me to say a few words about myself in English. As it happened, up until that moment I had never had or been requested to speak in English. Now, had I known this was going to be the case I might have been able to prepare and rehearse something clever to say! I was so lost for words that after having said my name and age, I stood there for three minutes tongue-tied. I could not utter a word more. Those present were waiting curiously for me to say something. All their eyes were on me. I could feel their anticipation. The embarrassment I went through made me feel very hot and bothered. Sweat was dripping down my face and neck. I stood there like a lemon. Finally, the chairperson could see I was not going to say anything else; he asked me to sit down and immediately introduced another new member. The person was two years younger than I was. When he took the floor, he gave a fluent account of himself. As he was doing so, a sense of shame dawned on me. I could not accept that someone younger was more able than I was. At the end of his great exposé, everyone was impressed with his performance and started to clap. To some extent, I felt my poor showing had made his even better. It seemed that whilst the members were clapping, they were sending me a coded message. This was one of the worst sticky moments in my life, which I have never forgotten and never will. That day I felt so inadequate to the point that I wanted the ground to open up and swallow me. That person was no other than my cousin Vadivel Vencatachellum. Although quite rightly he must have been pleased with himself, I suspect he never realised the positive effect his performance had on me. That 'incident' could easily have destroyed me, but being a fighter, as I am; I was determined to turn that outcome to my advantage. I used every opportunity and encouragement the club gave me to practise communicating in English. In time, I

Here is my cousin Vadivel (AKA Deva Vencatachellum) together with his wife Petra on his left and my nephew Harmon Chellen (AKA Dessiga) on his right and the girl is Julia—Vadivel's daughter. He currently resides in New Zealand. After we said goodbye to each other way back in 1967, it was 43 years later that we met again whilst on a mini world tour with my wife. We spent twenty days together at his place and it was wonderful.

was able to master the language. Later on, I went to develop my public speaking skills.✍

Crying in the…

It was summer 1966; I was spending a weekend with a group of friends in a bungalow at the seaside resort of "Pointe-aux-Sables", Mauritius. We were saying goodbye to Tamod Tirvengadum, a club member who was leaving the island to pursue a career abroad. At one O'clock in the morning, we had gathered in one of the rooms. With the lights dimmed down, we were listening to Elvis Presley singing his famous song: Crying in the Chapel. Whilst we were listening to the song, I made a wish.

Afterwards, to my surprise, I discovered that my prayer had been answered. Out of the blue, I'd received the news that the Chief Male Nurse from a hospital in the South of Wales had accepted my application for student nurse training but wanted me to attend an interview at the British Council in Mauritius to prove that I could speak English. Thanks to the Second Tamil Scout, it was my ability to hold a conversation in English fluently that got me through the interview. That day I thrashed a queue of over four hundred candidates and I felt so good about it.

Strangely enough, it was an interview I nearly did not have, because the Chairman of that committee, a certain Mr. Padayachy, who was rumoured to be on the take, was delaying it. I went to see him to ask what was causing the delay and I got as far as his assistant who informed me that they had received no request from anyone to interview me. I was flabbergasted. Luckily for me, when the Chief Male Nurse had sent his request letter to the British Council he had also forwarded a copy of it to me. When I duly produced my letter, suddenly the letter of request they had received magically appeared. It was buried in one of their in-trays. It was and still is common knowledge that corruption and bribery exist on a large scale in Mauritius. People were offering bribes to officials to secure a permit to go and study nursing abroad. The going rate, as I understood it, was 400 rupees. I believe there was an intention to sell my offer of a place to someone else. Luckily God was on my side and the attempt, if there was one, was foiled.

Alas! After the initial drama and excitement of having had a successful interview, I was confronted with the hard fact that I had no money to pay the required sea or air fare and there was no one I knew for me to turn to for financial help.

My mother could barely make ends meet; she did not have that kind of money to give me. In desperation, I accosted an aunt on the side of my dad as she looked rich to me. She had a big house and a liquor shop, in the town of Vacoas. She responded that she was already supporting her son who was doing medicine abroad and that was quite a drain on her finances. I needed to find a way and somehow I was determined to find it because I had to. This was a chance I had been waiting for and I was not going to let it slip through my fingers or was I?✍

The Deal

I recall telling Mr. Chellin, who was then a tenant of ours and a good friend of my brother Kisna, that there were many of my friends whose parents had the money ready for them to travel. Still, they had not been successful with their application to work as nurses abroad. Meanwhile, I had a successful application, but I did not have the money to pay the fare. Why couldn't I've been born in a rich family? It was hard to feel that I had the luck of the Irish where each time a door opened up there was an obstruction in its way.

'Tell me Mr. Chellin do you know of anyone who can lend me the money. I will work hard and pay it back?' I prodded.

He shook his head, 'No.'

That was the most depressing answer I had always hated to heard.

'But surely you must…' I began to say.

I was aware my mother had left me in her Will a thatch house standing on a small plot of land. That got me thinking.

'Err… I have a piece of land that I am willing to put as collateral,' I added.

"When the West breathes its questions and the East listens with its silence, the world begins to sing in a language older than borders."

‘Ah, ha!’ After a moment of reflection, he said, ’I know a money-lender in Port Louis.’

‘Can you take me there, please?’

He looked at me and I could feel the hesitation. He scratched his head a few times and then said, ‘Let me first have a word with your brother Kisna.’

After that conversation, I spent the rest of the day and night waiting. When I woke up the next day and waited all morning and then came the afternoon, still I’d heard nothing. By then someone had told me the name of a person who may be able to lend me the money against the land or even buy it. I made my way to see him. When I got to his place, he was sitting in an armchair with a bottle of rum on his side.

‘Does your mother know what you are doing?’

‘No, sir, but I—‘

‘Come back when you’ve talked to her and bring her with you.’ He then swallowed a mouthful of that white spirit.

I was certain my mother would not agree. If no one was going to accept to deal with me then my situation was hopeless. I spent the rest of the day in the house, brooding. I could see my chance fading away. When two days later I met Mr. Chellin and asked him if he had any good news for me, he looked at me and said he was working on it.

In one lobby, a wave of depression hit me. Everything looked so hopeless. I did not intend to spend the rest of my life as a typist, working for peanuts with no career structure.

After four days of my initial chat with Mr. Chellin, I heard my brother Kisna had decided to be my moneylender. He lent me 1000 rupees and in return, he was to hold my plot of land as collateral. I was quite agreeable with that arrangement.

I was thrilled. By the time Mr. Chellin had taken me to Port-Louis to get my passport, pay the passage, and bought a few clothes to take with me, out of the loan I was left with 200 rupees (less that £4 in those days), which were the total sum of money I had in my pocket when I’d later on arrived at London Paddington train station. Still, a whole new world had opened up for me, and I began to dream of eating white bread.

Although I had every intention of paying back the money I had borrowed from my brother in order to retrieve the land, when I did eventually arrive in Wales, I gave up the idea of repaying the loan. As far as I was concerned since I was not coming back, he could forfeit the land and good luck to him.

Of course, my mother had no idea what I had been up to and not wanting her to discourage me, I postponed telling her anything about my wheeling and dealing including my departure. I figured the less she knew the less chance she had of interfering with my plan.?

As I close this chapter of reflection and identity, I’ve written a verse—brief, honest, and true. It captures my journey in rhythm and rhyme. Not a summary, but a glimpse into the man I’ve been, and the life I’ve lived. I call it “HE.” I dedicate it to Georgina—my soul, my mate, my muse—and to those who walk with courage, even without a nickel.✍

HE

He was born in Mauritius, a tropical isle, a quiet town,
With big dreams in his heart and hopes that knew no bounds.
He faced his trials, his struggles, hands down—
But never gave up, never lost his ground.

He came from Navamah and Armon’s care,
Two guiding lights, steadfast and rare.
They taught him grace, the strength to strive,
Their love the compass that shaped his life.

He moved to England, land of promise and gold,
Worked as a Charge Nurse, Lecturer, and writer bold.
He loved Georgina—first on his list,
His only mate, his soul, his truest gift.

He travelled the world and met many a face,
Shared stories and riddles with warmth and grace.
He learned from cultures, from every view,
And inspired others with all he knew.

He explored the internet, vast and wide,
Wrote a book and gave it with pride.
He faced hardships, travelled through storm and strife,
But met them with courage, and a nickel-less life.

He wrote his story, once untold, now retold,
Revised it thrice, made the chapters unfold.
He wished to leave a legacy, strong and clear,
A voice that would echo year by year.

He taught with passion, his voice a flame,
Igniting minds, never seeking fame.
He healed with hands both firm and kind,
A heart for service, a brilliant mind.

He stood for justice, for truth, for grace,
In every hall, in every place.
He mentored many, gave them wings,
Believed in dreams and daring things.

He cherished laughter, the gentle tease,
The quiet moments, the evening breeze.
He danced with wisdom, aged like wine,
A soul refined by love and time.

He honoured roots—Beau Bois and sea,
The mango trees, his memory.
He spoke of Mauritian skies so blue,
Of childhood days and friendships true.

He held Georgina close, his guiding star,
Her love his compass, near or far.
Together they built a life profound,
In every silence, her voice was found.

He watched his son with pride and care,
A bond of intellect, strong and rare.
He saw in Maurice a thoughtful light,
A quiet strength, a mind so bright.

He welcomed granddaughters with open arms,
Their laughter, their questions, their radiant charms.
He passed down stories, songs, and lore,
So they'd remember what came before.

He saw in Tricia a radiant flame,
With kindness and courage that earned her name.
Her laughter echoed, her spirit soared,
A daughter whose love he deeply adored.
He stood by David, steady and proud,
A son whose strength spoke soft, not loud.
With quiet resolve and a loyal heart,
He played his role, a vital part.

He lived with purpose, wrote with fire,
Each word a thread, each line a lyre.
He stitched his legacy, bold and wise,
A tapestry beneath wide skies.

He is the man behind each line, each deed,
A life of honour, love, and need.
He is Sydney S Chellen, steadfast and true—
A man of vision, of heart, of hue.

His tale lives on in verse and prose,
In every chapter, his spirit grows.
He walks beside us, though out of sight,
A timeless soul, a guiding light.✍

Family & Fur Ever

- *"All my heart in one frame—whiskers, paws, and unconditional love."*
- *"Where legacy lounges on the sofa and loyalty naps at our feet."*
- *"The whole clan, tails included—my story, my sanctuary."*

From left to right:
***Standing**:*
my mother, grandmother, brother Kisna, Mr. Chellin and his wife.
***Sitting**:*
Myself and Mr. Chellin's son Francis.

"The way we regard ourselves shapes every gesture we extend toward others."

"Let no man shrink your spirit—if they try, do not crumble. Rise, not in rage, but in quiet brilliance, and let your worth speak louder than their dismissal."

March 1967
It was time to say goodbye to the land that had cradled me for so long.
Time to part from the brother whose generosity made my journey possible.
Time to kiss my dear mum farewell—her embrace lingering as I stepped into the unknown.
From that day forward, ten long years would pass before our eyes met again.
A decade of distance. A lifetime of longing.
Parting is such sweet sorrow—
a phrase too gentle for the ache,
yet too true to deny

Chapter Three

The Departure…

CHAPTER 3 – THE DEPARTURE

Each player must accept the cards life deals him or her; but once they are in hand, he or she alone must decide how to play the cards to win the game. Voltaire.

I am sailing…

Saying goodbye is such a sweet-sorrow… It's not the goodbye that hurts but the flashbacks that follow.

It was March 3rd, 1967, at the tender age of 21, when against all odds, I was leaving Mauritius on the French ship called Jean Laborde. My destination was South Wales, United Kingdom. It was the day my life changed forever.

Three days before that momentous moment I'd decided it was time to tell my mother what was going on.

I recall on that morning of March 1st when I was about to let the cat out of the bag, my mother was sitting on one of her door steps leading off the veranda. I had thought hard about the best way to give her the news. Should I beat about the bush first or should I just come out with it? How would she react to the news and how would I cope with her reaction? In the end, I chose to cut to the chase and tell her straight.

'Mother,' I said sheepishly, 'I am leaving.'

As I said that, she asked flippantly, 'Where are you going, son?'

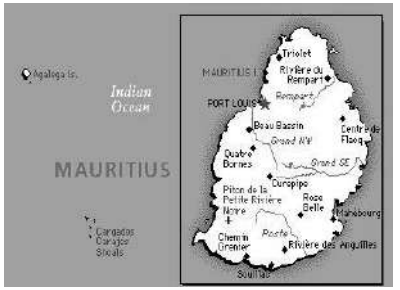
By the way she'd responded, I felt she thought I was going out somewhere with my friends.

'I am leaving the country, mother,' I replied softly.

Oh dear, this certainly got her attention. She turned her face briskly and stared at me. 'You are doing what?' she spouted looking more stunned than furious.

I had expected her to be angrier than she was. I watched the disbelief on her face as we went silent for a long moment. I wanted so much for her to wish me good luck and give me her blessings. Perhaps it was not something that I deserved.

From left to right:
***Standing**: my mother, grandmother, brother Kisna, Mr. Chellin and his wife.*
***Sitting**: Myself and Mr. Chellin's son Francis*



This is the suitcase I used to carry my worldly belongings and a folder containing my passport and other travel documents

The Jean Laborde, was the last of four sister ships built for Messageries Maritimes. All ships were twin screw with Burmeister and Wain diesels developing 12 500 BHP with a maximum speed of 18,5 knots. They were designed for use on the Marseilles to Madagascar and Mauritius service.

Perhaps I had no right to expect her to be receptive and accepting after keeping the news of my departure from her until the last minute. Looking back, could I have done it any better? Of course I could, but I was too consumed with my own selfish needs, and chose what can only be described as the sneaker way out.

'Mother…'

It appeared she had tuned me out. I repeated, 'Mother…'

She cut me off. 'When did you say you are leaving?' she enquired trying hard to process the information I had given her.

I bowed my head and said, 'I did not tell you when, mother, but now that you are asking I will be leaving on Friday.'

'You mean this coming Friday, Friday the 3rd of March?' she said raising her voice slightly.

I looked at her and nodded.

'I see. Then I guess there is no point in me trying to change your mind, hey?' she said with a dry grin on her face. 'But, what are you going to do for money? I have none to give you, and how are you going to pay your fare, my son?' She genuinely sounded concerned and disheartened. Although I had a job, she knew by the end of the month I was skint and she was my money bank.

'Don't worry mother, I have already paid the fare.'

She frowned. 'Have you? Where did you get the money?'

I hesitated for a while before telling her that I had pledged my share of my inheritance to my brother Kisna.

She was not amused.

'Oh, no, you didn't?' she uttered, looking quite displeased.

Once again, there was a long silence. I waited for her to take in the news before I left her to go and continue with my packing, which did not take me long as I did not have much. Just one pair of socks, one vest, one pair of pants, one shirt, one pair of trousers, one handkerchief, and a jacket.

"Leaving home wasn't escape—it was expansion. I didn't abandon my past; I carried it forward. New lands taught me who I've always been."

After making sure I was ready, I came out of the bedroom and saw that my mother was still sitting there. I went to sit next to her again. I tried in vain to explain to her why I needed to go. Then I began to realise that maybe I did not play it right! Maybe I was too focused on my own needs that I did not consider hers! I just did not know what more to say to her to soften the impact of my departure was having on her, so I cowardly left to go round to see significant people and bid them farewell. ✍

My two grandmothers

Unlike most people, I should say I was lucky to have two grandmothers from my

▲**Sitting**: My first grandma **Standing**: (from left to right) Uncle Pye, brother Kisna, brother Marday and niece Fifi.

▲**Sitting**:My second grandma. **Standing**:My brother Marday, my Auntie Mani and her first daughter. Photo taken in 1955.

From Left to right
Auntie Goindoo Celsis with
her son Phillippe

As I was never encouraged—allowed really—to address my elders by their name. Here is uncle Rajagopal▲, and I can recall clearly how one day my mother and him had a big disagreement. Neither of them talked to each other until the final moment when he was lying on his death bed.

From Left to Right
Uncle Vel, my mother Navamah,
Uncle Somoo, and Auntie Achee

My cousin
Rajen, eldest brother Marday
and my aunt Tanga

mother's side, but unfortunately, it was not a blessing at all, for I knew very little of either of them. My first granny was ***not*** very fond of me and she knew how to show it. Why she disliked me, I am not sure. All I know is that for the first four years of my life I never knew she existed as I had no relationship with her, mostly because we lived far away from each other, and when I did come to live closer to her and visited her a few times I could see there was still no chance of a relationship germinating. Both my mother and my first grandma are dead now and they are buried in the same tomb at "Saint Jean" cemetery Plot 111 by their wishes and once a year I go and put flowers on their grave.

My uncle 'Pye' (short for Soopaya) was tall, slim and a very quiet man. He used to live two houses away from my mother at Beau-Bassin. I met his wife only once. I remember she was wearing a white sari and as I recall she was tall, slender and quite pretty. After their divorce, my uncle Pye lived an almost solitary life until he died. As far as uncle goes, he was an uncle in name only.

My second grandma was equally distant. Although she was introduced to me as my second grandma she was not a grandma to me in the true sense of the word because she was the sister of my grandmother and therefore made her |my great-aunt or grand-aunt. She married four times. I had been to her house a few times and she had been to my parents' house also. She was pretty and nice but I can't recall her doing anything for me. She too is dead and she is also buried in "Saint Jean" cemetery Plot L118.

One good thing about my mother moving us to Beau-Bassin was that it provided me with the opportunity to get to socialise more with my uncles, aunties, cousins and nieces on my mother's side. My auntie Achee was the eldest half-

Back row: Marday, Manee,
Front row: Goindoo and Manee's mother.

From left to right
back row:

Pakion, Jegadassen, Siven, Vel, Rajen, Kadress, Vassou

Front row:
Lomba, Tyanaigee (Mimi), Goindamah (AKA Goindoo), Narainen (AKA Singaron), Sinda, Indrassen, Vadivel (AKA Deva)

sister of my mother. She married twice. With her first husband named Nagayah, she had a son called Vel. Her second marriage was with Rajagopal and she had one son named Somoo and two daughters Tangachee and Logoo. They all lived on the property next door to that of my mother. Vel was Aunt Achee's eldest son. He was a serious sort of man and liked his liquor. Each time I used to go to his place he would feed me which was great because his wife was a terrific cook. One of his sons, Mootoo Nagayah was about my age. As we used to go to primary school together we became friends, which was great. But the problem was that sometimes we would be up to no good and I was always the one to get the blame!

Uncle Somoo was in the same age group as my brother Marday. He was of medium height and used to fascinate and dazzle me as whenever I saw him walking around he was forever twisting and untwisting a silver chain around the forefinger of his right hand. I believe he started this strange habit to stop himself from smoking.

My mother generally got on well with people but she was not the kind of person to pick a quarrel with.

On one particular occasion she and my aunt Achee were arguing and it was quite funny. As they lived next door to each other, each time they came out of their respective kitchen they began to throw insults at each other and these were not little insults; they were bitter and vicious. They were loud and everybody in the vicinity could hear them. They had found each other's weak points and tore at them. This is when I discovered that my mother was a great fighter with a huge vocabulary and not all the words she knew were nice ones. The argument became so savage that I ran out of the house to my friend's so that I did not have to hear them. Fortunately, after that, it never happened again and they managed to mend their relationship with each other.

Then there was my aunt Tanga Venkatasamy. She had only one son called Rajen who was slightly older than me. He was a tailor and a good one too. About the time I was leaving Mauritius, he was emigrating to France and we have not seen each other since, although we have talked a couple of times on the phone.

Another auntie and cousin to kiss goodbye was aunt Goindoo Celsis and her son Phillippe who later on studied to become a lawyer. She too was married twice. I had visited them a few times before. She was very pretty and a sweet loving dumpling of a woman, married to a white man and quite intelligent too. She lived in the city of Port Louis. I remember her being very happy when I told her I was going abroad to study and she could not resist advising me to take good care of myself.

Whilst there were uncles, aunties, cousins and nieces on my mother's side, there were also those on my father's side whom I wanted to hug for what I perceived at the time to be the last time. Take, for example, my uncle Singaron Vencatachellum and his wife Goindoo. After the death of my father, my mother needed all the cash she could get to feed us. With the help of my uncle Singaron, my brother Marday succeeded in obtaining a job at a petrol station in the town of Rose Hill, Mauritius. In order not to travel home every day, he stayed with my uncle. He became very close to my uncle and his twelve children. As my uncle's children started to fly away from the nest, my brother Marday was the one who maintained close liaison with them until they died. One good turn certainly deserves another! My uncle Singaron had a sense of humour. He must have liked football because he created his team of twelve children, one for every month of the year, I guess!

▲ *My uncle Narainen D Vencatachellum (AKA Singaron) b.01.11.1902, d. 21.08.1984) with his wife Goindamah (AKA Goindoo) (née Chellen, b.16.05.1908, d.19.12.1985).*

◢*Here is my cousin Rajen Vencatachellum and my eldest brother Marday in their prime standing side by side.*

My cousin Anba with his sister and wife

▲1968.
My uncle Candasamy Chellen witnessing the wedding of my brother Kisna.

◀Here is my brother Kisna standing next to uncle Parapen, who was a tailor by profession and he gave my brother the break he needed. He took my brother under his wing as an apprentice and helped him start his own business as a tailor. Also in the picture are Parapen's two sons whose names I have forgotten.

▲Here is a very early picture my Candasamy with his family:

◀From Left to Right
Mrs Camala Chellen (née Appavou)
Sylvern Chellen
Vicky Chellen
Deve Chellen
Candasamy Chellen

▲This is Dannisen Chellen, one of Kisnamah's grandchildren.

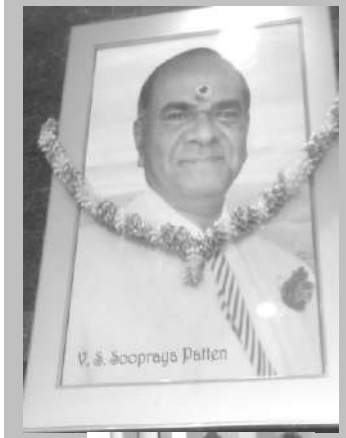
My cousin Canée Parapen with her husband (both deceased)

▶1967.
My brother Kisna with his wife Peddy as they looked in their wedding costume.

She had four children and two adopted children that her husband had from his previous marriage.

◀Here is a photo of how my late aunt Kisnamah Chellen (née Soobrayen) looked like in her latter years.
(1915-2007)

Sitting in the front row: Peddy's Parents



From Left to Right Back row: My brother Kisna and his wife Saraspeddy holding their last daughter, Rubina.

Front row: Nadia, Priscilla and Doraj.

On the right: My second brother Marday with his wife Manie and four children

From Left to Right: Maligaye & Devegi
From Right to Left:
Prega (AKA Dasson) and Dessiga (AKA Harmon)

◀In this quiet frame, love lingers—her smile, his gaze, still speaking. Gone from the world, but never from the heart that remembers.
Vispa Patten and my sister in law's sister, Fifi. Also their children.

▲*This is the house I used to live in before I left Mauritius. A couple of years later this four-bedroom thatched house was destroyed by a cyclone.*

▶*In 1991, soon after my mother died, I sent my brother Kisna money to build me a three-bedroom concrete house so that the land will not stay empty. The house was rented for Rs 6,500 until 2014. Now it has been converted into a holiday house for my family when we visit. It is furnished and has all utilities, like gas, water, sewage and electricity.*

As far as I know, none of them became footballers.

My brother Marday got on well with Rajen Vencatachellum. They were often talking, joking and laughing with each other. Of all the brothers and sisters, Rajen was by far the best and kindest. When Rajen was leaving Mauritius for England in the 60's, my brother wanted to go too. Rightly or wrongly, my mother did not approve as she relied heavily on his support and persuaded him to stay. My brother always felt that had he gone to England with my cousin he would have had a better future. Looking back on it now, I think that had he followed my cousin to England he would most probably have been financially better off, but he would not have had the joys that he now enjoys with all his children, particularly his grandchildren! This is not something to sniff at by any means!

As I later on discovered for myself, with all the riches that England has had to offer me, in many ways (especially now that I have reached the last phase of my life) I will trade it any day with my brother Marday to have the kind of family

network that he has surrounding him. Whoever said that the grass of our neighbours is always greener, knew what he was talking about.

To complete my task of saying goodbye, I had to go to several towns. I took the bus and went all the way to the town of Vacoas to see more uncles, aunties, cousins and nieces including uncle Candasamy and Cousin Canée. Although I had also seen and interacted with them, be it only a few times in my entire life, they somehow meant something to me. So they were worth a goodbye. In particular my cousin Canée Parapen and her husband (both now deceased). 'Uncle' Parapen gave my brother Kisna the break he needed. He was a tailor and he took my brother Kisna under his wing as an apprentice and helped him start a career as a Tailor.

From Vacoas I coasted to Moka to bid farewell to my cousin Amba's mother auntie Kisnamah.

Finally, there were two more but very important visits to make.

When I was leaving Mauritius, my brother Kisna had just got engaged to Peddy Padayachy. As I was leaving the country my brother accompanied me to his future in-laws and introduced me to them. When my brother eventually got married, which was well after I had left Mauritius, I did not witness his wedding but at least I did have the chance to know Peddy's side of the family. Of course, I missed the wedding that ensued. Sitting in the front row in the picture below are Peddy's mum and dad. They are now both dead, but their memories linger on.

The last person to bid farewell was Mr. Maxime—my soothsayer. Sadly when I went to see him, he had gone to France to see his son. Even sadder, when I later tried to send him the blanket he wanted, he had passed away.

Although I'd made a point of preparing for the excitement of my departure, as if the journey had a mysterious significance, it is indescribably hard to say what it was like to leave behind those I held dear with no prospect of ever seeing them again. Yes, although I had paid for a return ticket because I had to, I had no intention of coming back. I had decided to change my mode of life and that is what I was going to do. As I was combing my hair, I looked at myself in the mirror and told myself, 'Young man, up to now you have only seen the shadow and been well content with it; now, I am going to lead you into the substance.'

Unknown to me at the time, when my mother found out that I was not refunding my brother the money I had borrowed and I was letting him forfeit my share instead, she decided to pay the money on my behalf. Ten years later I found that although the thatch house had been blown away by a cyclone, the estimated value of the land was 30,000 rupees. What I had tried to do at one time was to share the land with my two brothers. This would have been my way of saying thank you for their help during my formative years. As the land was not big enough to be divided into two, I asked both brothers if either of them wanted to buy it for 15,000 rupees. This way one brother would have had the land and the other would have had 15,000 rupees. Unfortunately, we could not reach an agreement. So, I abandoned the idea and in line with my mother's wish, I later built a three-bedroom house on it. At the time of writing, the property was estimated to be worth a sum of seven million rupees and is increasing in value all the time.✍

Saying goodbye…

When it was time to board my ship, I took one last glance back. I knew that I had everything with me so it was not a "make sure I have everything" glance. It was more like a parting glance to Mauritius, my homeland, for I was not coming back.

The time had come for me to find my future, and it happened to be away from my homeland. I had no choice but to leave behind everyone dear to me. As it so happened there were not a lot of people whom I cared about for me to say goodbye to. Nevertheless, the few I had, meant a lot to me in different ways and leaving them behind was hard, but there was nothing really I could do about it. Perhaps the most painful was leaving my mother behind, because she and I had a special relationship.

As I stood on the deck of the ship "Jean-La-Borde" watching it move away from Port Louis harbour, I struggled to cast a lasting look at familiar faces gathered in the crowd on the seaport waving their tired hands. I could not help the tears trickling down my cheeks as I contemplated the thought of never seeing any of them again! But I could not banish from my head if anyone would care if I did or not. The answer came well after my farewell when I found out I was in fact part of their memories, particularly that of my dear mother.

The ship kept edging slowly forward, taking me further and further away from the dock. I could hear the chain that was holding the anchor in the deep blue water snap like a whip, sending my heart racing. Slowly, my homeland had disappeared and all I could see was that I was surrounded by an Indian ocean of blue water.

When it came time for me to go to bed, every night as I lay on my hammock in the ship, with my eyes closed, I could see my mother's eyes wet from the rain—the rain of goodbye. I lingered at her weeping eyes feeling my heart filled with regret. Could I have done things differently? Sure I could. But sometimes a man must do what a man must do!

For 28 memorable days, I spent at sea, passing through *Durban*, *Dar es Salaam*, *Nairobi*, *Somalia*, *Cairo* and *Tripoli* before I had finally reached France. From its capital, Paris, I travelled by train to Calais and then crossed the English Channel to the port of Dover by ferry.

Whilst I was on the ferry, I was so tired that I fell asleep. I was sitting in the passenger lounge on a bench next to a few people at the time. When the ferry had reached the Dover port, I heard the voice of a young woman telling me it was time to wake up. When I opened my eyes she told me 'nice to know you', and added 'did you realise you have been sleeping on my lap all night?'

I was stunned.

I offered my apology to her but I said, 'Please tell me, because I am curious, why didn't you push me off your lap?'

She replied with a nice smile, 'You looked so tired and in need of a bed, I was so happy to oblige with my lap.'

There you have it. That was the nicest answer I have ever heard from a total stranger, which restored my belief that there are indeed some very nice people in this world.

That being my first trip by sea, it turned out to be the best travelling experience of my life. I recall an old friend by the name of Bungaroo once said, 'A person who has never travelled has not completed his education.' How right he was. It is one thing studying Geography and History from textbooks and it is quite another being in another part of the world meeting people of different cultures and lifestyles.

From Dover, I travelled to London then took the train to Swansea, in South Wales. ✍

Let the train…

Having decided to let the train take the strain, I boarded a train at Paddington Station, London. It was roughly a six-hour journey to Swansea. Once I'd got myself settled in one of the cabins, I felt a sudden thirst. My throat was so dry that I desperately needed a drink. Being my first trip by British Rail, I did not know there was a buffet/bar on board. Okay, you can call me ignorant if you like!

On its way to Swansea, I noticed that the train was stopping for roughly three minutes at various stations. The next station on the way was Dingot. I came up with a stupid idea of jumping out of the train at Dingot, quickly picking up a drink in the shop and getting back in. Little did I know that this was going to be the start of a nightmare! It was an experience that would have a profound effect on my future behaviour for a very long time.

As expected, the train stopped at Dingot station. And as planned, I jumped out of the train, got myself a drink, but as I was paying for it I noticed the train was moving out of the station. I shouted 'Oh no.' I quickly put the can of Coke on the counter and ran towards the train. I guess I intended to try to open the door of the moving train and get back in or something like that. Suddenly I felt the arms of someone grabbing me from behind and pulling me away. It was the shopkeeper who had followed me. I used all my strength to try to free myself without success. Just as well. At that moment, I had very little concern for my safety. All my luggage and entry documents were inside that train and I had no money left. Can you imagine what that moment must have felt like?

After explaining my situation to the gentleman who saved my life, he advised me to stop worrying and he escorted me to the Station Manager. After answering a few questions, the manager did his best to reassure me that my luggage and entry documents that I had left on the seat in the train would be safe. He explained I could pick the next train that was due in an hour to continue my

*"In **1967**, I made the life-changing decision to leave my beloved island, Mauritius and travel to Wales to study psychiatric nursing at Cefn Coed Hospital.*
The hospital, built in the 1940s, stood with quiet dignity, its famous front door welcoming generations of caregivers and patients alike. I still remember stepping through that door for the first time—just inside, to the right, was the reception area, where my journey into mental health care truly began. That moment marked the beginning of a profound chapter in my life, one filled with learning, compassion, and the resilience required to care for others. Cefn Coed became more than a place of study; it became a home where I grew into the nurse—and the person—I was meant to be."

journey.

'I have no more money to pay for yet another fare,' I said worryingly.

'Don't worry. You won't need to pay again,' he replied with a reassuring grin on his face.

That was a bit of a relief. But despite his reassurance, I was still worried about my entry documents.

Waiting for the next train, was the longest hour of my life. Before leaving Mauritius, I happened to have read a few articles on pickpockets abroad. Thus it was not easy to believe that my luggage would not be lost on that train that went without me. I sat impatiently waiting for the next train. Whilst doing so, I saw a girl buying herself a drink from a dispensing machine. As she was about to take a sip she saw me staring at her. I am not quite sure what she thought; unexpectedly she offered me the drink. I initially politely refused but when she insisted, I took it. At last, I had quenched my thirst.

Finally, the long-awaited train arrived. Once I was in it, I was determined that I would not get off this time until I had reached my destination. I could not relax.

Although there were plenty of empty seats I'd decided to stand up holding onto a belt attached to the ceiling of the carriage. I kept looking through the windows of the train but my mind was too preoccupied with my suitcase and entry papers to appreciate and enjoy the beautiful countryside. I remember a man standing next to me, and he was trying to make conversation with me. Whilst I was politely answering him my mind was elsewhere.

Eventually, the train entered Swansea station. As it was preparing to stop, I heard an announcement. A voice was calling my name requesting that I report to the lost property office. No sooner than I heard that, I felt somewhat relieved. I knew that they must have recovered my luggage and hopefully my documents. As expected, the Station Master handed me my entire luggage and my entry papers. I breathed a sigh of great relief and could not thank him enough. At that moment if I didn't have faith in God, this was enough to restore my belief in Him. One should be afraid to entrust an unknown future to a known God.

Although the hospital was quite close to the train station and easily reachable by bus, to avoid further problems, I'd decided to take a taxi. After a few minutes, the taxi arrived at Cefn Coed Hospital—my final destination. To my surprise, the Chief Male Nurse came out to greet me. I was astounded when he let out that he already knew of my incident on the train. He explained how the Manager of the lost property office at Swansea Train station had rang him to say that they had found my belongings.

It had been a hard day and I was exhausted. The Chief Male Nurse appreciated that and in no time I was taken to the Nurses' Home and shown my room. After a shower and a warm meal, I went off to bed. It was the worst train trip of my life. An experience I will never forget. ✍

Cefn Coed Hospital

Cefn Coed Hospital, built in the 1940's was specially created for people suffering from mental illness. When I arrived in South Wales in 1967, it was in this hospital that I started a 3-year course in Mental Health Nursing. Three years later, I qualified as a Registered Mental Nurse and I was awarded the title RMN by the then General Nursing Council for England and Wales. ✍

Snow

It was November 1967, seven months after I had arrived in Wales which was covered in 8 inches of snow. For me, it' was my first experience. I went outside with other residents and joined in the fun of making and throwing snowballs at each other. Unlike my friends who had gloves on, I held the snow in my bare hands. Needless to say, I suffered endlessly for it afterwards. ✍

My room

When I lived with my parents, I never had a room I could call my own. I'd never even have a bed. I used to have to sleep in my mother's bed. Here I was in the Nurse's Home at Cefn Coed Hospital, Swansea, in the South of Wales, for the first time in my life I had my room furnished with a bed, bedside table, a built-in

wardrobe, desk/dresser and a wash-basin; and of course wall-to-wall carpet.

From March 1967 to September 1970 this became my home. Every morning, a housekeeper came to clean the room, change the bed linen and provide me with fresh towels. I had no rent to pay, meals and all utilities were free. That was the way it looked, but in reality, all services were charged at source and money was automatically deducted from my weekly wage. In my first week's wage packet, I had twenty pounds, which was more than enough for I hardly had any other expenses. ✍

Duty calls

Here I was working a night shift at Cefn Coed Hospital. Keeping awake as a night nurse can be quite testing. One night, Superintendent Farrell walked through my ward and saw me asleep. Instead of waking me up, he wrote a comment in my night-report-book and went. When I woke up and went to write the night report I saw this message: "*Nurse and patient slept well!"* Mr. Farrell was a decent human being and so was his wife who used to work with me on night duty. I think he had let me off for sleeping on duty, because previous to that incident, I had helped his wife who must have told her husband about my good deed.✍

My first Nursing qualification

Finally, I got my first professional qualification. I was so excited. I was a fully qualified psychiatric nurse. That was the beginning of my working career. Noth-

"Kindness, once given, often returns when you least expect it—even in the silence of a sleeping ward."

1967

Here I am standing on the ground of the Nurses' Home at Cefn Coed Hospital, Swansea, South of Wales, in 8 inches of snow wearing my mohair suit. Only a fool like me would dress like so!

"I decided to do my bit to help clear the snow, still wearing my mohair suit. Ha! Ha!"

Here I am. It was time to write the night report.

Sydney.S.Chellen,
MA, BA, PGCE (FE), RNT, RCNT, RMN, SRN.

▶*"Careful now—this smile comes with a side of sass and a swift Karate chop. I don't just break boards, I break expectations. So if you're thinking of testing my patience, be prepared to taste a roundhouse of reality—served with impeccable style and zero regrets."*

▼ *"Karate chop? My friend, I eat those for breakfast—with a side of sass and a sprinkle of sarcasm. You might have mastered the art of the chop, but I've got a PhD in dodging drama and serving comebacks hotter than your tea. So go ahead, strike a pose—but don't be surprised when I pirouette right past your punch line."*

Life as a student nurse had its pleasant moments?

They are three welsh colleagues of mine seen here in the back garden of the Nurse's Home.

◀*From left to right: Graham Huxtable, Liz Farrell and Syd*

◀*From Left to right: Graham Huxtable, Syd and Elfed Lewis*

ing breeds success as success.

Encouraged by my progress, three years later I qualified as a State General Nurse and rose to the level of Charge Nurse.

Thirteen years later I qualified as a Registered Clinical Teacher, a year later as a Registered Nurse teacher and soon after I took up a post of Senior Tutor managing a school of nursing for three years. Thirteen years after completing a Master's degree in education, I was offered a post as Senior Lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University in charge of Information Technology and Healthcare Research where I stayed until I retired.✍

Time to relax

Cefn Coed hospital was quite a happy place with many pleasant moments. The Welsh people were quite nice and friendly towards me. On my days off it was so nice to sit back and laze. Sometimes I would go and play table tennis or lawn tennis, other times I would participate in a friendly game of poker or twist. And then there was this friend, who called himself Elfed Lewis. He took delight in playing his flute and deafening my ears most mornings. One day he invited me to join in some fun. He, his girlfriend and a work colleague had gathered in the back garden of the Nurse's Home with their musical instruments. I began to show off with a flute. ✍

Finding the Missing Link

Every great man, I believe, walks stronger beside a remarkable woman. Not just anyone would do. She must be singular—one whose presence slices through the noise of ordinary life like a rare symphony rising from silence. And as fate would script it, I found her.

But destiny rarely writes in straight lines.

My journey began beneath the sun-kissed skies of Mauritius, meandered through England's fog-soft streets, and finally opened its arms on the spirited island of Malta—where the Mediterranean sun seemed to whisper her name. Crossing oceans for love—it reads romantic. In truth, it is longing dressed in silence, footsteps taken in faith, hearts stitched with the ache of anticipation.

Georgina Pauline Scicluna 23 years old

And then…there she was.

She was twenty-three when our paths entwined. A nurse by profession, Gemini by birth. Wielding wit like a scalpel—precise, playful, and piercing. Her words could charm sceptics into poetry, her laughter soothed like a balm after long days. She's not without her intricacies—no constellation ever truly is. A perfectionist to her core, she reaches for heights even stars might blink at. Unreasonable? At times. Admirable? Always.

What grips me most is her fearlessness. The way she dances with chaos, eyes wide open, daring gravity to catch her mid-dive. She lives like a pilot who's learned to trust the machine, the sky, and something more celestial. I watch her with awe—and sometimes a hint of fear. She's exhausting and exhilarating, a sea of emotion and contradiction, and I love every unpredictable tide.

Her fire humbles me. She juggles life's torches without letting them burn her. Yes, sometimes the flames leap too close. Her emotional shifts can be sudden, and the shores of her heart aren't always safe. But still—who ever loved someone predictable? You don't fall for a still lake. You fall for the sea.

Her loyalty? Immeasurable. Earn it, and she becomes a beacon. She weaves human connection like a storyteller stitches threads—each one meaningful, each one stitched with grace. Trust her, and you hold something sacred.

She's my rhythm, my reason, my missing link between who I was and who I dared to become.

"Till the moon deserts the sky,
Till all the seas run dry…"

Not lyrics, but vows. I will love her not until time ends—but until meaning itself bows to silence. Will time prove us forged in heaven's ink? Or are we a brilliant flame destined to flicker only in memory's keep?

That…only the stars know.

And just as prose could no longer contain her, verse rose to meet the rhythm of her soul."✍

The Link That Lit the Sea

She came not gently, but like wind with aim—
a gale that knew its place, its name.
Not here to soothe, but here to stir,
to wake the dust, to make dreams blur,
to teach the sky to speak once more,
and open wide a silent door.
She was twenty-three, yet time took heed—
it bowed before her quiet speed.
A nurse with hands that healed with grace,
and eyes that dared the world to face.
Gemini twin—both storm and peace,
her laugh a light, her hush release.

She did not walk beside my pace—
she danced ahead, a wilder grace.
She dared me leap where logic broke,
to love without a map or spoke.
Her name?
Georgina, fierce and free.

Her soul?
A song the stars still see.
Her moods?
A moonlit monsoon's sway.
Her heart?
A tide that shifts each day.
But once you dock within her bay,
you never drift, you never stray.
She is the flame I feared to hold,
the fire that warmed me from the cold.
She is the ink in lines I write,
the breath that gives my verse its flight.

She is the link—
not lost, but found,
miraculous,
profound.
So let the stars keep secrets still,
let time bend truth to test our will.

I've loved her in each tongue I knew,
and in the silence speaking through.
If we're a flicker, brief and bright,
then let us blaze in memory's light.
For I have known her—and in that flame,
I found my name.

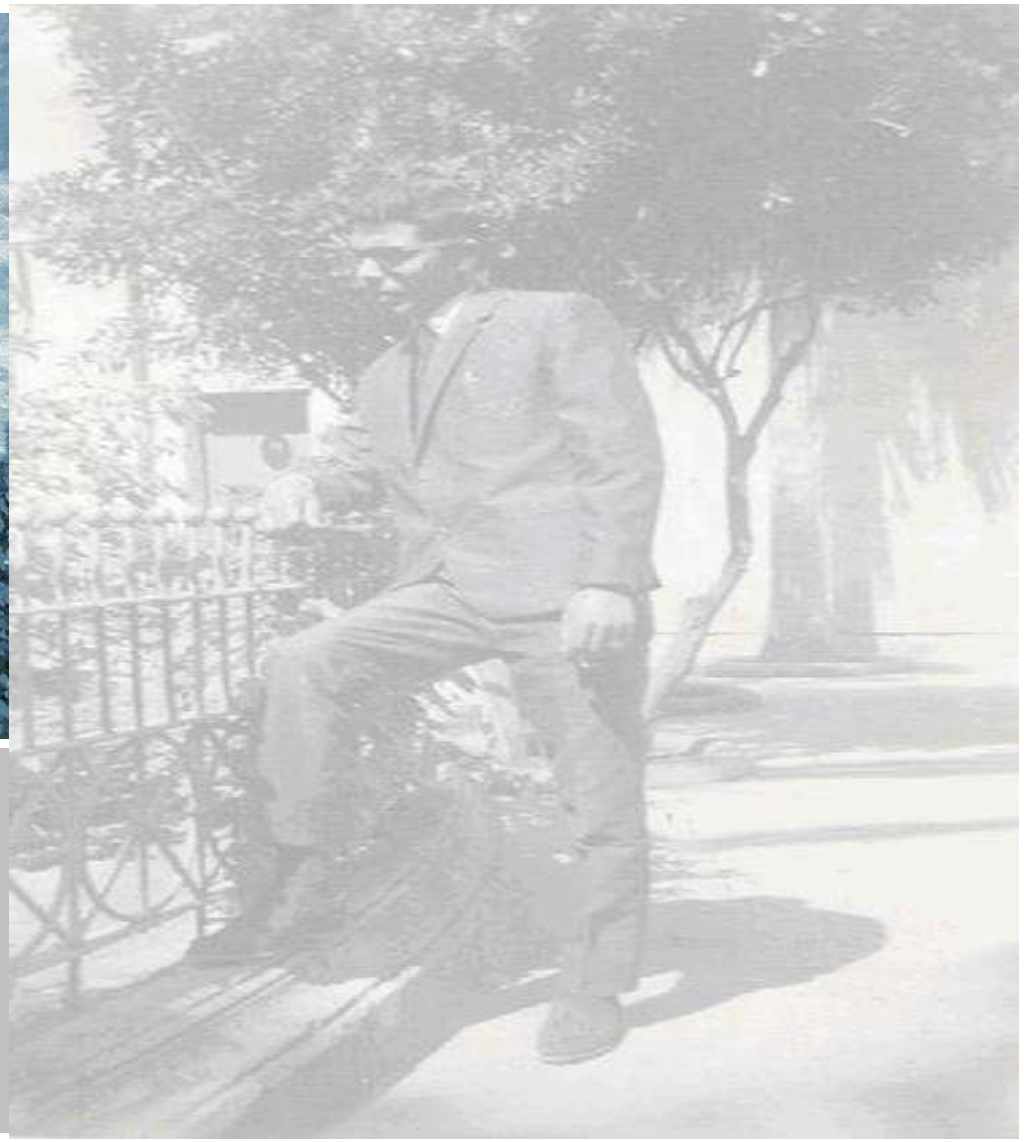
She stood there—not as muse, but as meaning itself—unfolding in the quiet aftermath of verse, where language dares to linger and memory holds its breath. The vow had been spoken, the stars invoked, and yet it was in the hush that followed where her truth shimmered most. I watched her, not to possess but to witness: the way her presence softened time, how even memory leaned closer, eager to be rewritten in her light. She is not the echo of my words, but their origin—the rhythm that summoned verse when prose could no longer contain her. And so I write—not to define her, but to be defined by the grace she leaves behind. In her light, I found my name. In her flame, I found my voice.✍

"All I want to do is spend my life loving you and making you happy."

Georgina Pauline Scicluna 23 years old

Name	Georgina Pauline Scicluna
Nationality	Maltese
Profession	Nurse
Vital Stats	36,26,36
Eyes	Brown
Hair	Brown
Colour	White
Hobby	Reading, TV
Fav. Drink	Anisette/Brandy
Fav. Food	Rabbit Stew
D.O.B	30.5.1947
Age	23 years old

"She is the stanza my soul returns to—the verse that steadies, the light that sings. In a world of fleeting beauty, hers is the kind that stays—etched in memory, stitched into legacy. My heart's compass, my life's muse—she is beauty, devotion, and home. To call her beautiful is to whisper the truth; to love her is to live it. Like the peacock in my prose, she carries the weight of wonder with every step. She is the tapestry's golden thread—binding past to present, love to legacy."



Love is such a wonderful thing and we always had plenty to give to each other. The further apart we were the deeper we felt for each other. Absence did make our hearts grow fonder. We wrote countless of love letters to each other during our two and a half years apart. I would regularly request the local radio station to play a song for her. There were times she worked on night duty but would ask her mum to wake her up to listen to the songs I had requested for her.

Inscribed at the back of this photo:

"Mon amour,

'J'envoit ce petit et doux souvenir plein de notre amour. Je ne vous oubiera pas jusqu'à la fin. Je suis a toi cherie.

Treasure this snap of ours, where it reminds you on that special day "25th of March 1968".

To Sydney S Chellen
With fondest love
and thoughts from
x Georgina x

Chapter Four

The Courtship…

CHAPTER 4- THE COURTSHIP

It may not have been the face that launched a thousand ships but it certainly sent my heart racing…

There goes my everything…

Here is Gina and Syd being affectionate.

Gina with Sam, the Yorkshire Terrier.

"Forever starts with this moment."

When I saw her, I just had to have her for myself. She looked stunning. When I got to know her she proved beyond doubt that she was my kind of girl. At the time we met, she was living in Malta and I was studying in Swansea, South Wales. As you can imagine, getting together was a bit tricky, to say the least.

It is said that absence makes the heart grow fonder. Could that have been the case with us? I would like to think so. I would make frequent visits to Malta to be with her and she would make all kinds of excuses not to turn up for duty to be with me. She was working as a nurse in a local general hospital called Saint Luke. Luckily, Sister Madelena, the Mother Superior in charge of Saint Luke was quite sympathetic to our situation and understood that we were in love. Shakespeare asked, "*What is that thing called love?*" Many poets have tried to provide an answer. I am almost at the end of my life, and I am still trying to work it out. One thing that I am certain and if only she knew it, is that I adore this woman with every drop of blood circulating in my veins although at times she could be quite a pain.

Love is such a wonderful thing and we always had plenty to give to each other. Absence did make our hearts grow fonder. The further apart we were, the deeper we felt for each other. We wrote countless love letters to each other during our two and a half years apart. I would regularly request the local radio station to play a song for her. Later on, I learnt from her, that there were times when she worked on night duty she would ask her mum to wake her up to listen to the songs I had requested for her. Sent requests for songs to be played for her became a regular habit of mind. I made frequent visits to Malta to spend quality time together. Each time I returned to England I would immediately begin to think of the next time we would be together again and I could not wait for the day to come.

Being a non-white courting a white girl, there were times when we were out together I felt ill at ease when I saw people staring at us. Heaven knows what they were going through their minds. I am certain some of them thought I was a visitor from Mars. Whatever their thinking or feeling towards us, this did not stop us from getting lost in our private world enjoying many blissful moments. Her kisses were full of unspent promises. After our first kiss, every event in my life was changed forever.

During the period Gina and I were courting, each time I visited her I stayed in a

Gina in her homeland, Malta.

Born under the sparkling sign of Gemini on 30th May 1947, Gina radiates the charm, wit, and warmth that make every moment with her unforgettable. A true twin spirit—curious, vibrant, and endlessly engaging—she brings light and laughter wherever she goes. This photo captures just a glimpse of the magic she's shared with the world.

▼ *Picture of Gina, taken by Syd on 3rd April 1969 whilst standing at the Upper Barrakka in Malta G.C*

"Who is that pretty girl looking at me?" I asked myself.

21 year-old Gina in front of the Parliament building in Valletta, Malta. Gina wondering if she has found Mr. Right

Gina being photographed by Syd in a hotel dining room in Valletta

Gina and Syd
on her terrace in Qormi, Malta. GC

1967, Gina in her house at Qormi, Malta, Preparing for an outing.

Gina and I on her balcony in Qormi, Malta. We could not get enough of each other

1967, Gina in her homeland: Malta. GC

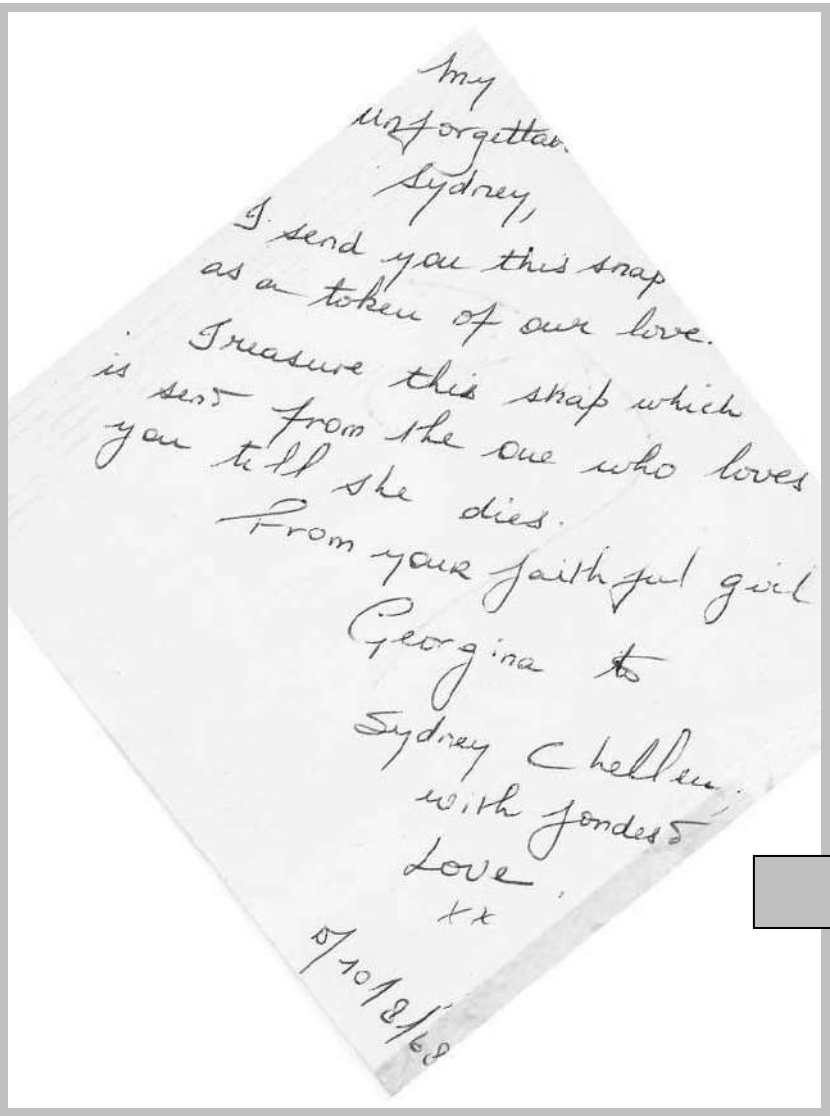
1969, Gina and I enjoying our summer holidays together in sunny Malta.

1969 *Gina posing again on the balcony of her mother's house in Qormi, Malta.*

Gina and I sharing a moment together on the roof of her mother's house

1967, Gina on her terrace: Malta. GC

1967, Malta. GC
"On the terrace of time, Gina sat like a dream—serene, radiant, and unknowingly divine."



My
Unforgettable
Sydney,
I send you this snap
as a token of our love.
Treasure this snap which
is sent from the one who loves
you till she dies.
From your faithful girl
Georgina to
Sydney Chelsea.
With fondest
Love.
xx
7/10/68

Gina

This deep red dress was a gift from Gina's aunt Susanna, who lived in Gozo. During summer holidays spent with family there, Susanna took Gina to meet a local woman who crocheted dresses by hand. Gina chose this one, and her aunt lovingly bought it for her. It became one of Gina's favourite dresses—a beautiful reminder of her aunt's warmth and the summers they shared.

◀Georgina Scicluna in her hay days.

"Our love letters hold the proof—of a love that bloomed long ago and still blossoms today."

Syd

1967
◀Edwin Scicluna in the H.M.S Ark Royal in Plymouth. U.K.

"Here I am standing prouly besides my in-laws—seen, accepted, and whole."

My father-in-law was an extra-ordinary man and my mon in-law a beautiful and brave woman. I got lucky: I love my in-laws. Sadly I did not spend enough time with them because as soon as I got married I flew back to UK.

hotel in Valetta. In the morning she would come to fetch me and we would go and have breakfast in the hotel dining room, which we dubbed 'the lonely table just for two.'

There are certain moments in our lives which fix like a burr on our imaginations, events which would not let us go. They are generally tragic ones, like the great fire in London or the destruction of Pompeii. But none of them outrank that single moment when Gina and I first set eyes on each other at Luqa airport, Malta. Who could have foretold that two people from two different parts of the world so far apart—Gina in Malta and I in Mauritius—would come together and unite as one? If this was not destiny, then I do not know what is! It is hard to pin down what magic brought us together, but whatever it was, I like it. ✍

Meet my in-laws

Being a coloured chap, having a serious relationship with a white girl, one of the most important things for me was to be accepted by my in-laws. Had they not accepted me, I would have moved on because it did not appear right to me to take her away from her parents without their blessings. Besides, I loved her too much to put her in a situation where she would have had to choose between her parents and me. I knew we were hopelessly in love with each other and I guess she would have gone against her parents' wishes if they had objected. However, I have long believed that no matter how selfish love may be, it is wrong to emotionally blackmail a woman. If you do that, sooner or later she will have nothing but contempt for you, especially if by chance the relationship should go wrong.

Fortunately for me, they did not disapprove of me. Indeed, my mother-in-law adored me and I have always been very fond of her too. ✍

Sweet mother-in-law

Long after I was married, I understood that my mother-in-law who was a primary school teacher by profession used to read my love letters I directed to Gina.

Deep in her heart, she knew that her daughter would be okay with me. Born on 1st January 1916 she was a typical Capricorn with a charming and creative personality as one would expect from one born under this zodiac sign. In my dealings with her, I found she was warm, witty and enthusiastic. Whenever I was in Malta she would cook me the most wonderful Maltese dishes. She loved knitting and one day she spent days knitting me a brown pullover. I did not mind when the sleeves turned out to be a little longer than I wanted. I treasured it for a long long time. ✍

Making a Maltese cross

I enjoyed talking to George, my father-in-law. He was an engineer in the dockyard and he was also a Capricorn born on 8th January 1909 making him seven years older than his wife. He was nice to me too. He particularly appreciated it when, unlike his other son-in-law, Peter, I talked very little when we were at the table eating. But one day I unknowingly upset him by eating all his red chillies. He was not amused when he found out. He used to cultivate a chilli plant in a pot which he kept on top of the flat roof of his house. Until he saw me eating one, to him a red chilli was a flower. ✍

A special sorry…

Whilst Gina and I were courting, my would-be brother-in-law Edwin was in the Royal Navy, serving on the HMS Ark Royal. I met him a few times during my visits to Malta. He was an okay sort of guy and we got on quite well, even though he tended to talk a lot at times. He had a beautiful Nissan locked up in the garage. I used to drive it around when he was away from home. Little did he know that I only had a provisional driving licence! I wondered if he ever noticed that little scratch on the left front wing that I put there whilst attempting to park the car backwards into the garage! If confession is good for the soul, now that I have confessed, will he forgive me or laugh at me?✍

Mary with her eldest son, Anton, and me

Mary and her husband Peter with baby Anton.

Mary the eldest

Mary, my eldest sister-in-law, was already married. I had very little contact with her. I remember once I wrote a letter to her and she wrote back saying "You don't need to write to me, I will get news of you from the family." That was the last letter she ever received from me. On the whole, I got on well with her. If you ever get invited to dinner at her place you'll do well to starve yourself for a couple of days. She is a wonderful cook. She even has her own local radio cookery programme. She is generally referred to as the Queen of the family, because she is filthy rich and lives in one of the most beautiful houses in Mosta, Malta, not to mention her other 'Palaces' across the water in Gozo and elsewhere.

Mary's house in Mosta has more rooms than I could count. If you think that the outside of the house looks good, you should see inside. It is not an exaggeration to say that when you are inside it is like being in a royal residence. Armoured statues standing on a marble floor guard the entrance hall, embellished by gilded mirrors and side tables. ✍

Evelyn with husband Paul Magrin. Unfortunately after several years of ill health Paul died on 22.10.2013. He was a pleasant man with a good sense of humour. I will always remember him for his instructions to me on how to get from the airport to his house: 'always turn left' he said.

Patricia, Evelyn, Gina and David in Valetta.

Never bet with a hustler

My youngest sister-in-law, Evelyn, was perhaps the one member of the family I had loads of fun. She used to like playing dominoes and felt she was good at it. Little did she know that I was even a better player than her and, at times, I could be a little bit of a hustler! Each time I was in Malta, she wanted me to play dominoes with her, so I obliged. I could see she likes winning, so I would let her win a few times. After lulling her into a feeling that she is a better player than I, I suggested we play a few games for money. She agreed. I would then give her a good thrashing. At first, she could not understand why she was suddenly losing all the games. Refusing to cut and run, she would finish off losing all her pocket money and then she would cry for me to give her back the money. Did I? Well, not immediately. I would wait until it was time for me to return to England, and then give the money to Georgina to hand over to Evelyn after I was gone. ✍

Inscribed at the back of this picture: 'a day to remember 28 March 1968'. She is of course Evelyn (my youngest sister-in-

Evelyn, Patricia, David and Gina seen next to Edwin's car. Guess who was behind the wheel.

The black sheep of the family

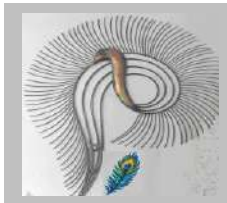
One member of my in-laws that I really did not get to know much was Joë, my eldest brother-in-law. He had left home, trotting the globe. Long after I was married, he turned up at my home in Bradbourne Lane, Ditton, wanting to see Gina. As it was the first time we met, I was scared that he had come to make trouble. All he wanted to see was his sister. He spent a few hours with us and then went. He was pleasant. He has since visited us on three different occasions. The last time he popped in, was in 1999 and brought us a box of fresh fish. Then he disappeared. His whereabouts became unknown until 30th March 2006 when we received a phone call telling us he was dead. At his funeral service, one of his friends said, 'he led a colourful life' and added, 'Joe was like Malta itself—small but with an awful lot of history.' He was once married to an Anglo-Indian girl called Jean, with whom he fathered two beautiful daughters, Karen, and Kim. They both are now married and have a family of their own. ✍

Here I am in Malta showing off with Edwin's car.

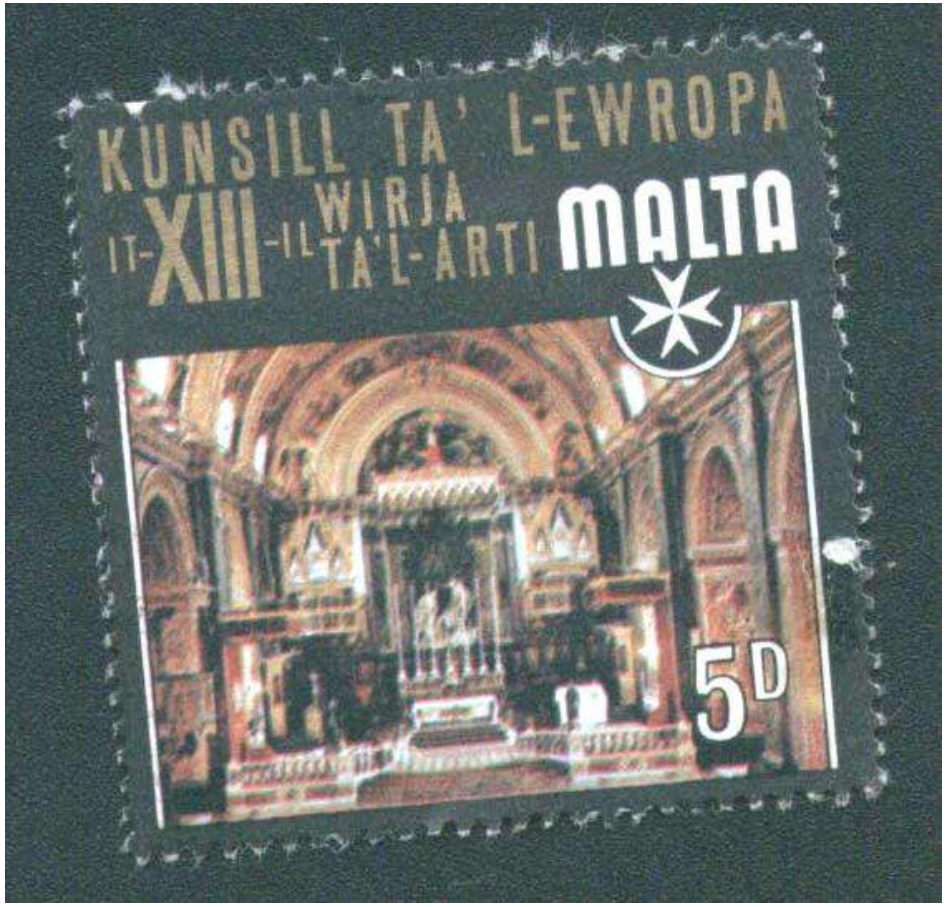
Joë Scicluna (1943- 2006)
These photos were taken when Joe paid us a passing visit at Bradbourne lane, Ditton.
David, Gina and Tricia looked excited whilst Maurice… well he was being himself!

The magic of a 5-penny Postage Stamp

At the young age of 15, whilst I was still in Mauritius, encouraged by my brother Marday, I started to collect postage stamps. Little did I know then that this hobby would one day lead me to the woman of my dreams! In my stamp collection album, I had just one postage stamp from Malta. I was always on the lookout for a Maltese pen-friend to correspond with, and exchange stamps. I was not able to get one when I was in Mauritius but as soon as I landed in Wales I got lucky and found the perfect one. However, instead of swapping stamps, we exchanged hopes and aspirations. A few months later, we met and we have never looked back. ✍



"A woman's worth isn't measured by how long she holds a man's gaze—only by how deeply she knows she deserves to be seen."



The Stamp That Changed My Script

It began with a collector's eye—a large stamp from Malta, nestled among many, but whispering louder than the rest. I wanted more, not knowing I was asking for more than postage. So, I wrote to Gina, seeking stamps, and found instead a soul. A pen friend, whose ink would one day sign our vows. That square inch of paper, pressed with ink and fate, didn't just travel across seas—it rewrote my story. Not in haste, but in grace.

From Right to Left

Mr. and Mrs. Dione and Doris, Cilia, Mrs. Georgina Chellen, Mrs. Rita Cassar with her son.

On my word of honour

One year after we met, Gina and I decided to get engaged. Without realising it, I was the first brown man setting a trend. I felt I knew enough of her to know that I had found the right woman for me. I wish my mother, my brothers, my relations and friends could have been present to share our happiness, but it was not to be!

The year was 1968, when Gina and I were toasting our engagement, in the company of two of her best friends and other guests. Soon after it was time for me to fly back to Wales leaving Gina to herself. Every week I would receive one or two letters from her. It was our way to keep close and keep alive the flame that burned between us. Did we succeed or did external forces have the better of us?✍

"On my word of honour, I vowed not just to love, but to witness—to stand beside her in every season, to hold the silence and the song. My WOW is not a moment spoken, but a life lived: a promise etched in the rhythm of our days, in the quiet loyalty, in the laughter that still finds us. She is my foundation, my grace, my unwavering star—and I honour her not only in verse, but in every breath of devotion."

Our Engagement, 1968

April 1968

Gina wearing one of the outfits I bought her when we were courting

Qualifying as a Psychiatric Nurse was only the beginning. After three years of practice in a psychiatric hospital, I was seconded to study General Nursing. Just eighteen months later, on 24th March 1977, I made headlines as the nurse with the "best bedside manner."

My appetite for growth and impact only deepened. I went on to earn a Bachelor's degree from the University of London, followed by a Master's from the University of Kent. Eventually, I transitioned from nursing to academia, becoming a Senior Lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University. My specialist subjects were Information Technology and Healthcare Research, and my publications included the bestselling The Essential Guide to the Internet for Health Professionals.

Chapter Five

The Career…

CHAPTER 5- THE CAREER

'He who so neglects learning in his youth, loses the past and is dead for the future.'

Euripides 484 BC

Delayed gratifications

We live in a society where we want everything and we want it now, without much consideration for its future impact. This attitude is learned from a young age where children want things immediately and parents more often than not give in.

However being able to delay immediate gratification has a direct impact on our success in life, and not just financial, but in all aspects of life. Armed with this knowledge, for three long years I'd sacrificed pleasures for study. It was a sweet reward when I finally became a qualified psychiatric nurse. It immediately provided me with a secure career with a good prospect of taking me a long way up the social ladder. I could visualise a brighter future. But there was one snag – my permit to stay in the United Kingdom was fast running out. Inadvertently I had upset the wife of the then Divisional Officer in Cefn Coed Hospital. To teach me a lesson, he was determined to have his revenge on me. When my passport became due for renewal, he refused to support my application for an extension. This was further complicated by the fact that Gina and I had already made a plan to get married. To say I was in a pickle would be an understatement. Unless I could quickly find an alternative solution I would be faced with deportation.

I didn't want to humiliate myself in front of the Divisional Officer by asking for his forgiveness. I thought there must be a way of circumventing him. I decided to fly to Malta.

When I arrived there, Gina took one look at me and said, 'What's the matter?'

There was anxiety written all over my face. 'It's this bastard Divisional Officer. He is determined to frustrate my application for renewal of my permit to stay in England. I don't know what to do.'

Gina frowned. 'He is being awkward with you?'

I nodded.

'All right. Come with me.'

'Where are we going?'

'To Valetta, to see the British Embassy and I will explain your predicament.'

'Oh, okay!'

The British Ambassador at the Maltese Embassy was a middle-aged English man and quite nice. After discussing my case and hearing that Gina and I were getting married he said, 'Give me your passport.'

He looked at my Mauritian passport and grinned. He picked up a pair of clippers and clipped the corner of the passport. He then picked up a rubber stamp and stamped cancelled on one of the pages inside the passport.

'Here, it's done… Give me a moment and I will issue you with a new passport and a certificate of naturalisation for you to keep.'

Moments later, he shook my hand and with a grin, referring to Gina, he said, 'I have to protect this girl.'

What the ambassador had done was to issue me with a permanent residency certificate in the UK. It is said that the pen is mightier than the sword, never has this been so true. One moment I was on the verge of being deported from the United Kingdom and the next I had become a British Citizen with full entitlement to a British Passport. Isn't it amazing?

On my return to the UK, I was walking in the hospital corridor at Cefn Coed Hospital, when the Divisional Officer saw me and he stopped and asked me, 'Mr. Chellen, can you remind me which date your UK permit runs out?'

'Why?' I asked.

'I need to inform the finance office to get your final wage ready before you go back home.'

I looked at him with a smirk on my face. 'What makes you think I am going back home, sir?'

'Oh, you can't stay in this country without a valid permit.'

'Yes, I know this…'

Trying to pretend he is sorry, he said, 'I wish I could offer you work but without a valid work permit my hands are tied.'

'But, you can, sir, because I am now a British Citizen.'

His face went white as if he had seen a ghost, then blushes of pink appeared. 'How did you manage that?'

I shook my head and started to walk away.

'Mr. Chellen, don't bother to apply for a Staff Nurse post in this hospital.'

I turned round and looked at his pathetic face. 'Don't worry, I won't. But make sure you keep paying me until I leave,' I said, with firmness in my voice.

If at that moment he could have throttled me, I am sure he would have. After that, he knew I had outwitted him, but more importantly, I had got him off my back.

Well, he did try not to pay me the correct wage but the trade union quickly got to him and put a stop to his shenanigans.

On 8th August 1971, Gina and I were married in Malta and soon after she came to live with me in Wales. It was time to move to pastures new. I applied for a Staff Nurse post in Oakwood Psychiatric Hospital, in Maidstone. Kent. My application was successful. Gina and I moved from Swansea to Kent. Three months later I was promoted to a Deputy Charge Nurse. To improve my chances of further promotion I applied for a secondment to do my General Nurse training. I was told I must wait for three years. I agreed. Three years later which was 1974 I discovered I had been bypassed by a woman who had come after me. I was furious. I needed an ally to help me fight the dark forces that were operating against me. I went to chat with a certain Mr. Moss. He was a Senior Nursing Officer and a very decent Englishman. After I told him how I was looking forward to being seconded to do my general nursing, he checked the record and noticed that other people had been mysteriously pushed in front of me. He looked at me as if he were studying me. 'Leave it with me,' he said.

A week later, he called for me and I went to see him in his office. I could not wait to hear what he had to say to me but at the same time, I was dreading that he was going to find an excuse to thwart my request. As I arrived at his office door he signalled for me to enter and take a seat.

He looked at me and smiled. 'Are you ready to do your general nursing, Sydney?'

'Yes, sir, I am.'

'Then prepare yourself. I have arranged for you to go.'

I was chuffed. This is exactly what I wanted to hear. 'That's… wonderful, sir,' I said. I could hardly get the words out.

'When do I go?' I expected him to say next year or something like that.

'Your course starts at the end of the month.'

'That's great!'

As it was already nearing the end of the month I didn't have long to wait. I swallowed. 'I'll go and get ready, Mr. Moss.' I was in a state of euphoria.

'Of course, you will continue to receive your full pay and a bonus allowance whilst you are studying.'

'This is wonderful news, sir. My wife will be pleased to hear that. Thank you.'

I just could not wait to get home and tell my wife.

Just before I'd left Mr. Moss's office that day I recall he told me that the course was going to be tough and that some of the people I was going to be with would try to give me a hard time.

'Don't be deterred. If anyone tries to upset you, just bear it and each time it happens, say to yourself that after eighteen months the pay off will be worth lots more than the pains.'

He had been through it himself, he therefore knew what he was talking about and I was ready for the challenge. Working in a general hospital and studying general nursing was very different. For one thing, the pace was faster than that of a psychiatric setting. There was a strong hierarchy. You are not allowed to address the Ward Sister if her deputy could resolve any issues.

When I got home and told my wife about the news, she said, 'Congratulations. I am so pleased for you! You deserve it.'

That night my wife and I had a celebratory dinner, but I was too excited to eat. Something I had longed for was about to come true. Having a double qualification had the potential of enhancing my chances of early promotion which, amongst other benefits my salary would go up. But I had to first survive the assault course awaiting me. I had a feeling that Mr. Moss was a wonderful man. As I got into bed that night, I thought, Why would Mr. Moss process my request so quickly after I chatted with him? Was he just being fair? Or did he see in me what perhaps

I could not see myself? I knew dark forces were working against me and somehow I was able to overcome them.

The date to start my course had come and off I went. Amazingly the time passed quicker than I had anticipated. Some working colleagues did try to make my life miserable, but I took everything they threw at me as part of the challenge I had given myself.

Eighteen months later I was a State Registered General Nurse. That was something to write home about. I returned to Oakwood Hospital and one month later, on the recommendation of Mr. Moss, I was promoted to Charge Nurse. It was another dream that came true.

1977 became a wonderful year for me. It was the year when I experienced this wonderful feeling called *joy*. It was the year when all the efforts and sacrifices I had made thus far paid dividends. Out of the blue, I received an invitation to attend a ceremony at a 5-star hotel in Maidstone where I was to be presented with my certificate as a Registered General Nurse.

Unknowingly, there was a pleasant surprise waiting for me. As I entered the hall amidst a few hundred guests, a young newspaper reporter accosted me and pulled me to one side. I was bemused when she told me that I had been nominated to receive the Jane Foord-King Memorial Prize for *Best bedside manner*. She proceeded by asking me a few questions. I was so shocked I could hardly express myself. How I came to be credited with such a prestigious award I don't even know but who am I to argue?✍

In the News

After the presentation ceremony was over, a photographer ushered me to one side and took a few photographs. Five days later, there I was in "the Kent Gazette" making news. I was so delighted that I bought a dozen copies so that I could give a copy to friends.

A male nurse shows girls the manner of success.

Making the Headline in a local newspaper

The Gazette, March 29, 1977

Sydney Seringapatam Chellen, who received the best bedside manner prize.
24th March 1977

MALE nurses would be proud of Seringapatam Chellen. On Thursday he was presented with a prize for the nurse with the best bedside manner.

Mr. Chellen, who comes from Mauritius, works at Oakwood Hospital. He was among more than 100 nurses presented with certificates and prizes at the Maidstone Health District School of Nursing prize giving at the Royal Star Hotel, Maidstone. Married with two children, Mr. Chellen received the Jane Foord-King memorial prize as well as the State Registered Nurse hospital certificates and badges.

Mr. Lawrence Jones, chairman of the district management team, thanked all the nurses for their devotion. He was confident that Maidstone nurses would continue to maintain a high standard.

Prizes were presented by the former chairman of the Kent Area Health Authority. Mrs. Jean Cockerill.

In the Royal Star hotel in Maidstone being presented with my General Nursing Certificate by Mrs. Jean Cockerill, the former chairman of the Kent Area Health Authority.

24th March 1977.

Mrs. Cockerill, a former nurse, said: "There is no doubt in my mind that there is nothing like a nurse trained here in Britain."

Never could I have dreamt such a wonderful moment in my life. To have my wife and children there to witness it made that day even sweeter. From that day onwards, I knew I could make something of my life if I tried hard enough.

I never looked back. I became thirsty for success. I wanted to taste more and more of it. I wanted my children to see the benefits of doing that little bit extra. I wanted them to copy my example and make a better future for themselves. I started encouraging them not to settle for second best. ✍

An attempt to be a good role model

My children could see I was a hard taskmaster and they did not (at the time) fight me when I insisted that they work hard too. I began preaching to them that if they can make sacrifices in their early years they will reap the benefits in years to come.

I worked for three years as a charge nurse before I felt I needed a change. I wanted to move into the community and continue my nursing career as a Community Psychiatric Nurse. A Senior Nursing Officer by the name of Ken Palmer had other ideas. He is dead now, and there is certainly no love lost between him and me. For some selfish reasons, he did not want me to leave the ward. He did whatever he could to block my intended move into the community.

'You can't go in the community *because you have no experience,'* Palmer told

me.

But wait a minute: How will I get the experience if I am not given the chance to go into the community to get that experience? It became clear that I was being stitched up and I was determined that I would be the architect of my destiny. The fact that I was getting itchy feet made Palmer nervous.

I finally made a move into teaching. Strangely enough, when Palmer discovered that I was not going to stay around to be manipulated, it appeared he had a change of heart and supported my application to take up a vacancy in the school of nursing. I was appointed at the Maidstone School of Nursing as a clinical teacher with immediate secondment on full pay to undertake a clinical teaching qualification at Bristol Polytechnic. That meant being away from my family for nine months. I recall driving to Bristol wondering if I had made a good career move. Looking back now, it was.

Having completed the course successfully, I returned and worked for a year as a qualified clinical teacher before I was off again for more study. I'd managed to persuade my Director of Nurse Education to offer me funding to study for a teaching qualification in Further and Higher Education. Once again I was off and this time for a full year on full pay. After completing this course successfully, I was immediately appointed as a Nurse Tutor in the Department of Nurse Education in Maidstone Health Authority. ✍

Yet another accolade…

Having observed that Information Technology was beginning to play a big role in education, I could see that sooner or later the health professions would have to embrace this technology whether they like it or not. I decided to develop skills and knowledge in this area. Having a personal computer was a necessary resource to pursue that project. But I could not afford one, as it would set me back £450 for a starter kit. I discussed the situation with my wife.

'Tomorrow I plan to go to town and see if the bank can lend me the money.'

'How would you pay it back?'

'Err… I don't know... work more hours I guess.'

'You are already doing quite a lot.'

Seeing that she was not keen for me to borrow the required money I needed to find another way. I had already worked out that I was smoking 20 cigarettes a day, which was costing me £1 per packet per day or £365 per year. £366 if you count a leap year. I told my wife that I need that computer so bad that I was willing to give up smoking. She laughed, as she knew I had tried that before and failed. Guess what? I did give up smoking and did use the money I'd saved from not smoking to buy that computer.

I spent hours teaching myself computing (although I did later on follow professional courses). I finally made my first computer program using the computer language called BBC BASIC. I showed one of my computer programs to a colleague. He encouraged me to enter it in a competition that was going on at the time.

'Oh, no,' I said, 'I don't think it is good enough.'

'Try it. What have you got to lose?'

He had a point. So I decided to post a copy and forgot about it.

Weeks later, my wife came running into my study, breathless. She hugged me and exclaimed, 'Sydney, your computer program won second prize.'

I was surprised. 'What?'

'Yes, read the letter.'

I had received a letter of invitation to attend an evening dinner at the Open University where I was to be presented with my prize. As the University was eighty miles away from where I was living, I was offered overnight accommodation free of charge plus travelling expenses. Gina and I attended and after demonstrating the operation of the program, the Organiser in collaboration with OSL (Open Software Library) offered me a contract for its publication, marketing and distribution to all educational establishments in the UK and in return, I was to receive a royalty fee of 25% on the sale of each copy. I gladly accepted the contract and signed it on the spot.

From there I went to follow a professional course in computing and I started to master other programming languages. I made three more computer programs. They too got snapped up for marketing by OSL. That was a double success for me. Whilst I was pleased I had managed to kick off the smoking habit, I was

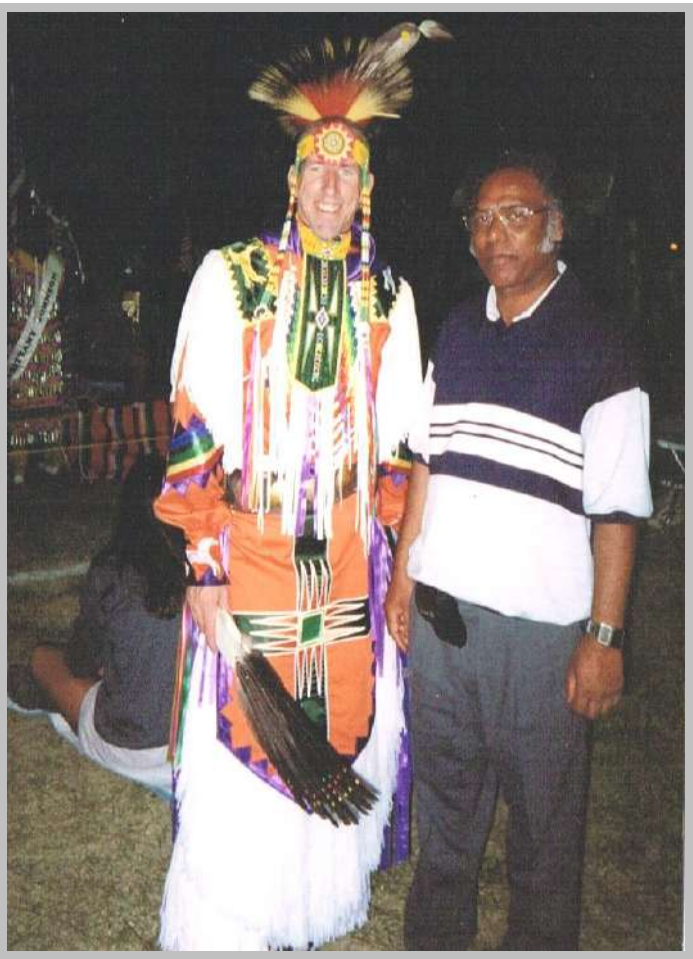
20th September 1999

Photo taken in front of the Capitol building in Missouri.

The sky was generous that day—soft light casting long shadows across stone and story. I stood not just before a building, but before a moment that would echo through time. Behind me, pillars of history; within me, a quiet resolve. That snapshot holds more than architecture—it holds the beginning of something I hadn't yet named, but already felt.

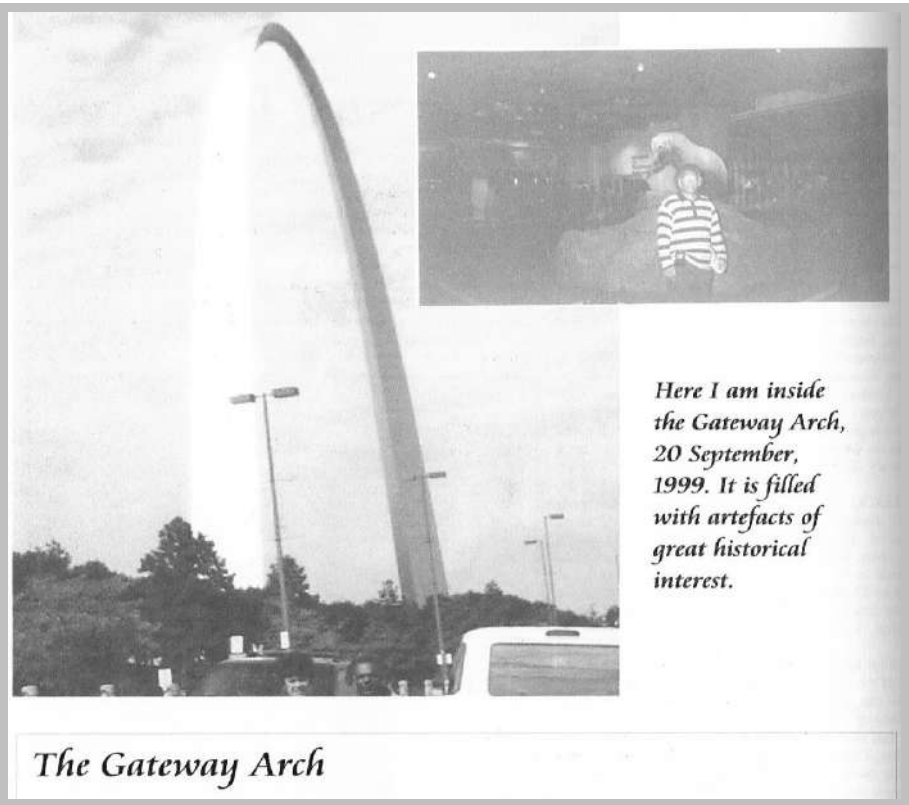
20th September 1999
Photo taken in front of the Capitol building in Missouri.
The guy next to me was my guide and husband of my host.

▶ As a young boy I used to play the shooting game Americans v/s Red Indians. I never thought that one day I would be standing next to a live Sioux. I met him at a POW WOW gathering during an educational trip to Missouri.



Education begins a gentleman, conversation completes him.

Dr. Thomas Fuller (1654-1734), Gnomologia, 1732



September 20, 1999

A warm afternoon in Jefferson City, Missouri. The photo was taken just outside the grand Capitol building, its dome gleaming against a sky that felt impossibly wide. I stood beside my guide—an affable local with a gentle voice and a knack for storytelling. He knew every corner of that place, from the marble halls to the hidden anecdotes etched into its history. I remember how he gestured toward the statues with reverence, as if introducing old friends. His presence lent the day a quiet dignity, grounding me in a place I'd never been but somehow felt connected to. That moment—frozen in the frame—was more than a tourist snapshot. It was a pause in time, a meeting of paths, a reminder that even brief encounters can leave lasting impressions.

Photograph taken at my first-degree ceremony – 1987
Bachelor of Education.

A milestone etched in memory, framed by pride and possibility. The gown hung heavy with meaning, the cap a quiet crown of perseverance. That day marked more than academic achievement—it was a declaration of purpose, a step into the world as both learner and guide. I stood not only for myself, but for every story that shaped me, every voice that believed I could. In that moment, education became not just a profession, but a calling.

1993 – A group photograph with fellow Senior Lecturers and administrative staff, marking the beginning of my career at Canterbury Christ Church University.

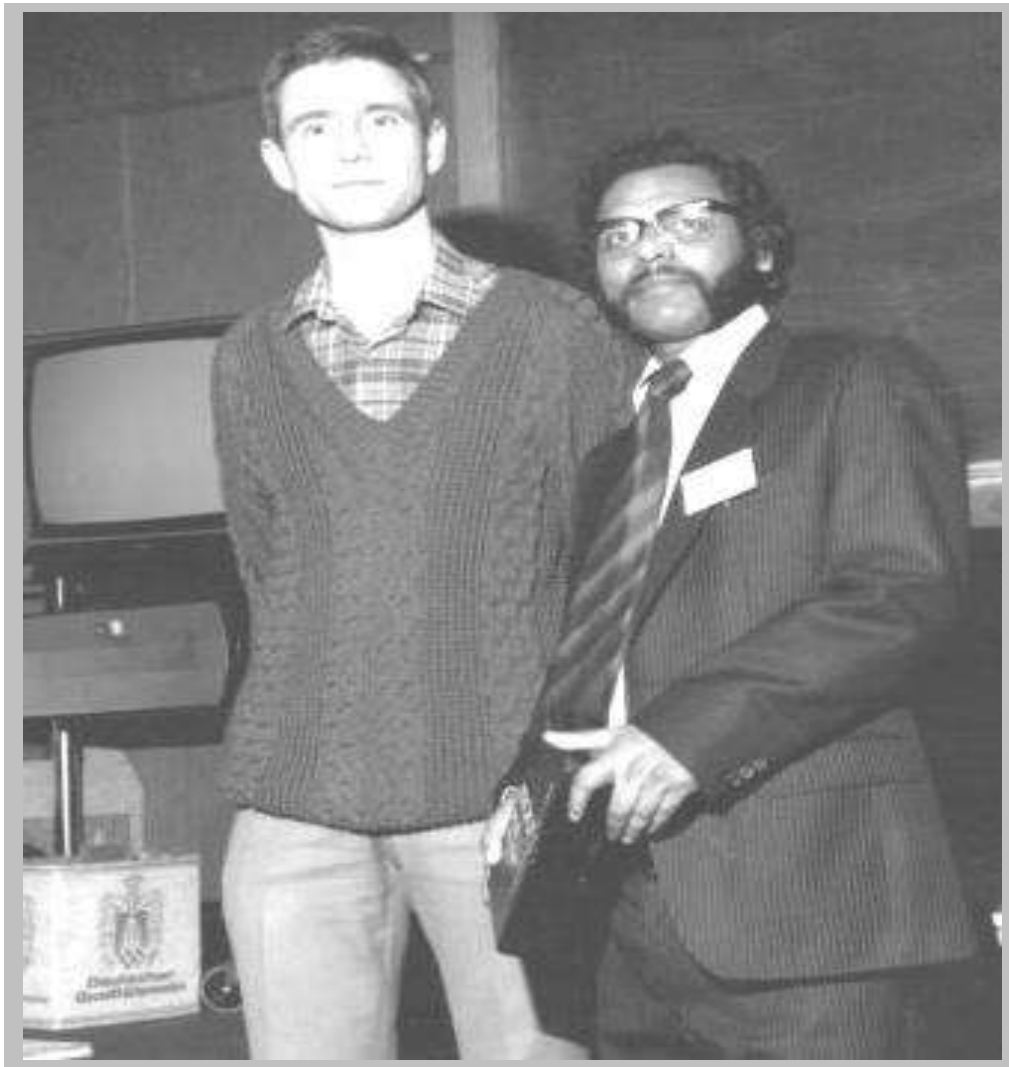
A moment of quiet pride, captured in the company of colleagues who would shape the rhythm of my professional life. We stood together at the threshold of shared purpose—educators, mentors, stewards of learning. That day held the promise of new beginnings, of voices uplifted in lecture halls, and of legacies quietly forming in the margins of syllabi and staffroom conversations. It was more than a photo—it was the first stitch in a tapestry of teaching, belonging, and transformation.

Here I stand, side by side with four of my colleagues, captured in a moment of camaraderie during our educational visit to universities in Lille.

The photograph holds more than faces—it holds the spirit of inquiry, the quiet pride of shared purpose, and the joy of learning beyond borders. We had come not just to observe, but to engage, to ask questions that mattered, and to carry those answers home. The cobbled streets of Lille became our classroom, the conversations our curriculum. In that frame, you can see the laughter between sessions, the dignity of representation, and the subtle thrill of being part of something larger than ourselves.

Photograph taken in Lille, France – 1986

Captured during an educational visit exploring the landscape of Higher Education. The city's architecture stood as a quiet witness to our curiosity, its cobbled streets echoing with questions about learning, legacy, and possibility. In that moment, Lille became more than a destination—it became a classroom without walls, where ideas were exchanged beneath slate skies and the future felt just within reach.



In Milton Keynes University, in 1984, where I picked second prize in a competition for best Computer Assisted Learning program for health. It was titled "CYO" (short for Choose Your Option).

1993- Graduation ceremony at Canterbury Cathedral
Receiving my Masters degree in Education

even more excited to discover I had found a way of earning extra cash. As they say, 'Every little bit helps.'

Having kicked off the filthy habit of smoking, my appetite started to increase. Before I realised it I had put on more weight than desirable and none of my clothes were fitting me. My immediate reaction was to restart smoking, but I quickly disposed of that idea as it would have been a retrograde step. After doing a few exercises, I managed to bring my weight to a healthy level. ✍

Fear of the unknown

Unprecedented changes were taking place in nursing and nursing education. To keep pace and prepare myself for the future, I registered as a part-time post-registration student on an undergraduate course. For three long years, I worked full-time, attended my degree course one evening per week, and spent whatever little time was left with my family. Our social life was almost none. By now I knew the importance of making extra efforts and I was delighted when the sacrifices paid off. I obtained a bachelor's degree in education. At the end of the course, I was so worn out that I swore I would not touch a book again.

In 1990 the Department of Nurse Education where I was working as a Nurse Tutor was in the process of being taken over by Canterbury Christ Church University and the Dean, Peta Allen, needed someone to manage it. My skills and knowledge were recognised by her. I was promoted to a Senior Nurse Tutor, a post that had been denied to me by a previous Director of Education because she favoured someone else. I was finally in charge of my school of nursing. I could not help remembering that when I first decided to make a move into teaching, I sought help from a Principal Tutor, by the name of Luckhurst. He rebuked me by saying, 'Whoever told you, you are tutor material?' That was such a put down, that I felt numb with quiet rage but I could see it was a statement about who he was as a human being. To prevent his insult from hurting me I decided not to value his opinion. I used the bricks he had thrown at me to pave a solid pathway for myself towards teaching just to show him how wrong he was in his assessment of me. As history will have it, during a departmental reorganisation he lost his post to me. Perversely I took great delight in reminding him what he had previously said to me, and he offered me a well-deserved apology.

In 1993, my Department was closing down and I had to choose between redundancy and accepting a post at Canterbury Christ Church University. I took the biggest gamble with my career. I reluctantly took the post that was being offered to me because it came with strings attached. It only takes a year to acquire a Master's degree. The requirement was for me to obtain this higher degree within three years else I would be either downgraded or fired. After a lot of thought, I took up the challenge and after a year I obtained a Master's degree in Education, whilst still maintaining an interest in Information Technology. Shortly after I had obtained my Master's, Cassell PLC, a mainstream publisher offered me a contract for a series of books on Information Technology for the Caring Professions.

At the time of writing, I was working as a Senior Lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University leading Information Technology for health, with five technology books to my credit. I was aiming for a total of 15 before my retirement. Sadly I did not make the target despite the fact that even an American Publisher was asking me to write more. When I was fifteen years old, I started writing poetry. And at seventeen I co-wrote a novella with a friend which we published. Before I got married I had given my wife-to-be a copy, just to show off. So my wife knew I loved writing and she loves reading novels. After we were married, I noticed she spends hours in bed reading and it was she who instilled in me the love of writing a novel.

After my retirement, I decided to give it a go. After months of word-processing, I completed my first romantic thriller. After which, I decided to write three more. I am currently working on a murder mystery.

"There were chapters in my life that felt like storms—loud, relentless, and impossible to ignore. But I learned to dance in the rain, not because I enjoyed the chaos, but because I refused to let it drown me. Every setback became a stepping stone, every scar a signature of survival. I didn't just live through my story—I rewrote it, one choice at a time, with courage inked into every page. And now, as I look back, I see not a trail of mistakes, but a mosaic of moments that made me whole."

To me, it is wonderful that I have found a nice way to spend all the time I have, now that I am retired.✍

Missouri here I come.

September, 20th 1999 I made the headlines again when Canterbury Christ Church University agreed to send me on a 2-week investigative study to Missouri University, at St Louis, USA.
This was another highlight of my career?

Moberly Monitor-Index & Evening Democrat, Sun, Oct.3, 1999-3D

INSTRUCTOR FROM England hosted by MACC

The most amazing thing about the United States to Sydney Chellen, a Senior University Lecturer from England, who recently completed a two-week exchange visit at Moberly Area Community College, is its size, considering that England is about the size of Missouri. Mr. Chellen is a Senior Lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University in Canterbury, England. He primarily teaches information technology and healthcare research to students following courses at the diploma and degree levels. The exchange program is sponsored by the Missouri Consortium on Global Education and Canterbury Christ Church University.

During his visit to MACC, Mr. Chellen was hosted by Associate Degree nursing instructor Linda Connor and her family. Mrs. Connor plans to visit England in May where she will be hosted by Chellen and his family. This is the first time MACC has participated in an exchange of this kind.

Mr. Chellen said it is hard for him to conceive of the expanse of the United States. In England, you can get to most points of interest in two or three hours within a County. When he found out that he was chosen to come here, Mr. Chellen had high hopes of seeing many of the attractions he had heard about…the White House (maybe meeting President Clinton), Dallas and Elvis Presley's Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee. He was somewhat disappointed to learn that there was no way he could do any of this on a two-week educational development exchange.

The main purpose of his visit was three-fold: to see what facilities/opportunities are available for students of health studies at MACC which enables them to develop and enhance appropriate IT skills and knowledge; to see what assistance is being offered to clinicians enabling them to make effective use of information technology in their work areas; and to obtain an inside view of the preparation and support being offered to students on Mental Health Studies, which is Mr. Chellen's area of expertise.

Mr. Chellen spent several days observing classes and visiting with instructors at MACC, and the last three days of his visit were spent with nursing staff at Truman University in Kirksville, and the University of Missouri Medical Centre in Columbia.

Never having been to the United States before, Mr. Chellen was amazed at the pace that most Americans keep. He was especially chagrined at having to get up at 5 a.m. to accompany Linda to work. The Connors live in Greentop, near Kirksville. Sometimes they didn't get home until 8 p.m. He observed that the English are much more laid back and as a rule don't keep such long hours. He only teaches three days a week and doesn't have a class until 10 a.m.

Originally from Mauritius Island in the Indian Ocean, approximately 2,400 kilometres off the southeast coast of Africa, Mr. Chellen has been in England for 31 years. He and his wife Georgina, live in Ditton, near Maidstone, about 60 miles from Canterbury. They have three grown children, a daughter and two sons. He has written four books,

mainly on information technology. His latest book, '*The Essential Guide to the Internet for Health Professionals*' is due out early next year.

One of the requirements for the exchange is that they find a compatible partner and be willing to host them during their visit. Mr. Chellen has great praise for Linda and the rest the rest of the Connor family. He said they, as well as everyone else he met, made him feel welcome. He was a little surprised that Moberly is in such a rural setting where the closest thing to a metropolitan area is Columbia, however, before he returned home, he and his hosts spent some time in Kansas City, where they attended the Renaissance Festival and in St. Louis. In Moberly, he took in the American Indian Pow Wow, which is unique to America. He said he and his family are looking forward to hosting Linda's visit in the spring.✍

Sydney.S.Chellen visits with MACC, Dean of Academic Affairs Bonnie Humphrey, at left, and his host, nursing instructor Linda Connor, at a reception held in his honour.

“When I was a child, my imagination ran wild in the fields behind our house, where my friends and I played endless games of "Cowboys and Indians," a staple of our youthful adventures. At the time, we saw it as a thrilling way to re-enact the stories we’d seen on television, unaware of the deeper histories and cultures we were mimicking. During my visit to Missouri, I attended a Pow Wow and met real Indigenous people—dignified, proud, and vibrant in their traditions—and it gave me pause. That experience reminded me how much more there was to learn beyond the caricatures of childhood play. It marked the beginning of a deeper respect for the traditions and resilience of Indigenous peoples, and recognition of how far my understanding had come since those carefree days.”

Pow Wow at McGuirk Arena

The arena pulsed with memory and motion—drums like heartbeats, regalia shimmering like stories stitched in time. Dancers moved in circles, each step a prayer, each turn a tribute to ancestors who once danced beneath open skies. The scent of sage lingered, the air thick with reverence. Here, tradition was not preserved—it was alive, radiant, and rising. In every jingle, every shawl, every stomp of the grass dance, the past met the present in a choreography of resilience. It was not just a performance. It was a homecoming.

Guest-of-honour

Here I am at a dinner given by Park Privet Hospital, 1975, where I was guest of honour for the evening. ✍

Divisional Officer
Administrator
Finance Officer
Myself
Nurse

Where the Table Became a Bridge

The table was a tapestry of cultures—roast chicken glistening beside salad dressed in laughter. We leaned into the glow of shared discovery, where knives met forks, spices met stories, and every bite became a bridge. The room held more than food. It cradled the hush before a toast, the sparkle of water in glass, the soft clink of plates and possibility. Overhead, a piece of abstract art watched quietly, a sentinel to something sacred unfolding. This wasn't just dinner. It was a memory stitched into the fabric of belonging—a night when strangers became friends, and the feast fed more than hunger. It nourished legacy.

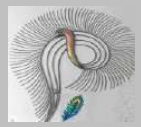
The Quiet Crown of Recognition

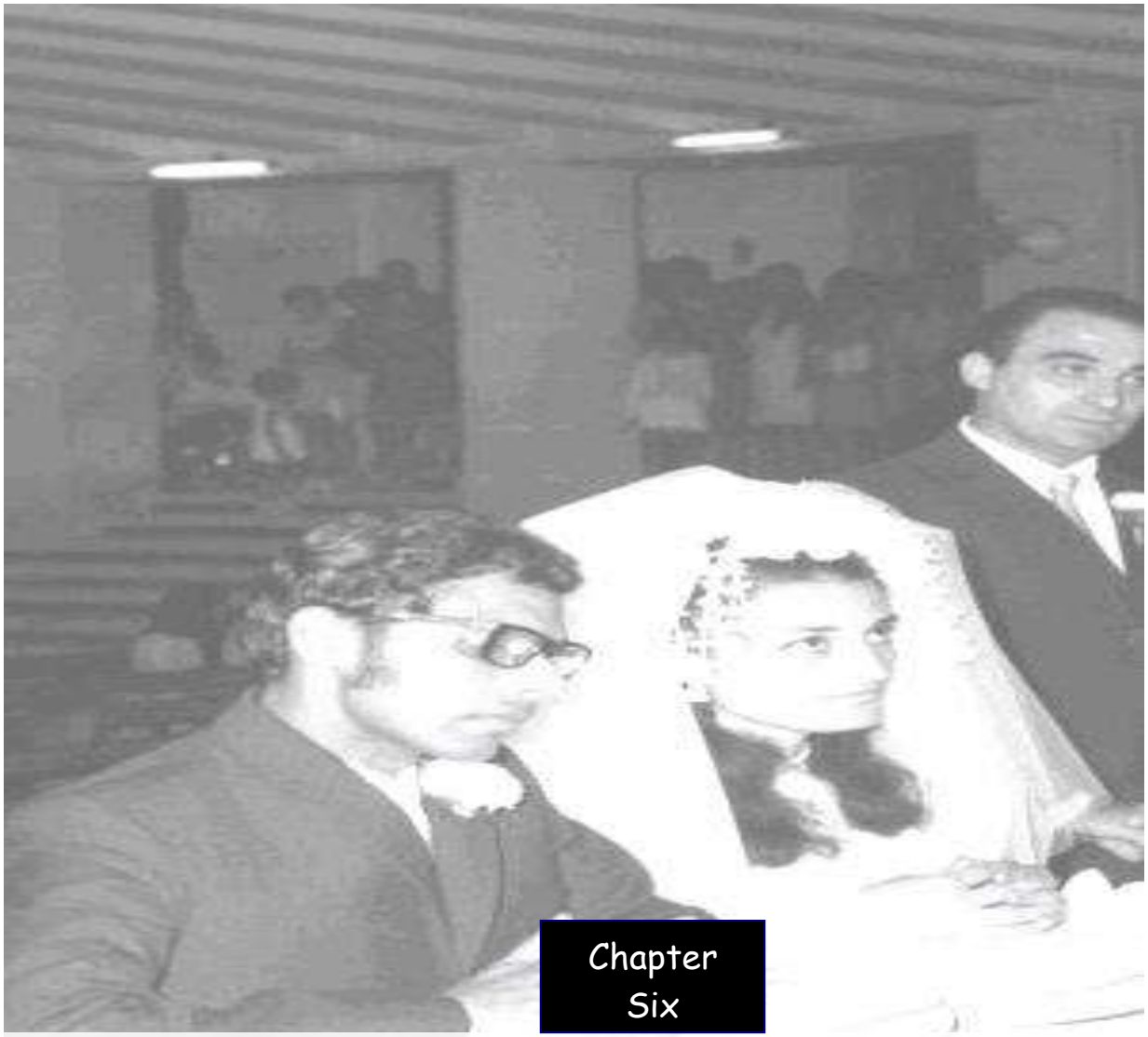
It was 1975, and I found myself seated at a dinner hosted by Park Privet Hospital—a gathering marked by candlelight, quiet pride, and the hum of heartfelt conversation. That evening, I was the guest of honour, and though the title carried its own weight, what I remember most is the kindness that filled the room. Faces lit with recognition, voices softened with respect. The occasion wasn't just a celebration—it was a gesture of gratitude, a moment where my work, my presence, was seen and cherished. In the stillness between courses, I felt the quiet joy of being acknowledged, not just, for what I had done, but for who I was becoming.

Finance Officer
Myself
Voluntary Officer

"Excerpt from 'The Grace of Gathering'"

"To be welcomed here tonight, not just as a guest but as someone whose story is seen and valued, is a profound honour. In a world that often rushes past the quiet miracles of connection, this gathering reminds me that legacy is not built alone—it's woven through shared meals, shared laughter, and the grace of being truly present with one another. Thank you for making space for my voice, and for allowing me to stand among you in celebration of all that binds us—love, memory, and the beauty of becoming."





Chapter Six

The Marriage …

8th August 1970

It was time to build a life beneath the sun with the woman of my dreams. That day marked the beginning of a journey rooted in love, resilience, and shared purpose. We recently celebrated our wedding anniversary, grateful for the years we've woven together—thread by thread, memory by memory.

Together, we raised three children: two sons and one daughter. Our youngest son earned a Master's in English Law, and our daughter, after completing her Bachelor's in English, became a primary school teacher. After working her way up she eventually became a Deputy Headteacher, however, after 28 years of being in Education she decided it was time for a change and studied for a Diploma in Policing. She is now a qualified police officer and is currently a trainee detective with Kent Police. Life has also blessed us with two granddaughters—bright, spirited, and full of promise. Our legacy lives on through them.

CHAPTER 6 – THE MARRIAGE

No one ever promised us that marriage was going to be a bed of roses and I never expected it.

Yes I do

August 8th, 1970 was the day Gina and I decided to tie the knot. Gina was definitely not the first Maltese girl to marry a foreigner, but she was certainly the first one to marry a coloured foreigner. To some Maltese people it was a novelty, but to me it was scary and somewhat intimidating. I even had to have special dispensation from the Pope before the priest would marry us. The Maltese are well-known for being staunch Roman Catholic, and as such whoever they marry was generally expected to be of the same faith and I was not. To overcome the problem, the catholic priest offered to baptize me and when I declined, purely because I wanted to be accepted for who I am, there was a crisis. Luckily this was swiftly addressed by asking for special dispensation from the Pope. After receiving the special blessings of the Pope Paul VI, I was asked to sign a contract agreeing that my off springs would be brought up as Roman Catholic. I had no issue with that.

The wedding took place in the Parish Church of Saint Sebastian, in Qormi and was witnessed by a few locals and of course, Gina's nearest and dearest relatives and friends. The sad thing was that no one from my side of the family was present. They did not even know it was taking place. Even if they did, they probably would not have attended primarily because the fare would have been the prohibiting factor. A gentleman called Mr. Anthony Spiteri stood as my best man. That was the day my life changed forever. I was no more the bachelor, I was a married man who had taken a solemn oath to love and protect my other half and I was determined to do so with every ounce of me.

As soon as the honeymoon was over, Gina and I flew to Wales, to begin our

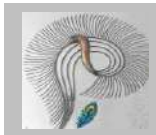
"In the hush of sacred light, we knelt—two hearts offered, one vow spoken. Before the priest, grace descended, and the promise became the golden thread of our forever."

lives. Gina left behind four siblings: Edwin, Joe, Mary, Evelyn; her mum and dad; and several relations and friends. Just like, three years previously, I had left behind (in Mauritius) all my nearest and dearest ✍

For better for worse…

Starting married life without a network of family and friends can be quite lonely and is not to be recommended. A fact I learnt quite quickly. Initially we lived in flats. Our first flat was 9B, Rose Hill Terrace, Swansea, South Wales, UK. It was a two-bedroom flat in a four-storey building. On the ground floor lived a married couple and they were also the caretakers. On the top floor lived a single Nigerian man, whom Gina would describe as scary, whilst we had the third floor, containing two rooms and a kitchen. The kitchen was reasonably big and contained two cookers and a sink. The cookers were so mucky that no one with any sense of hygiene would have been happy to use it to cook a meal. The second floor contained the bathroom and a toilet which we had to share with the other tenants. The carpet in the both bedrooms was so tatty, we had to replace it with our own money as Mrs Morgan, who was the landlady, felt it was good enough and therefore did not want to give us a new one. Gina hated the situation, particularly having to share the bathroom and toilet, but nevertheless she did her best to cope and did so extremely well. Full marks to Gina who was determined to turn the flat into a place fit for any decent human being to live in. She gave the place a good scrub and made it as cosy as she could.

Sometimes Gina had to stay alone whilst I went on night duty. She used to be



"We married with love in our hearts and absence at our backs. No choir of familiar voices, no family arms to lift us—but still, we rose. In a church where only half our story was present, I vowed with my whole soul. That day, I became a husband. And though fare kept my kin away, love carried me forward. Gina and I left behind our roots to plant something new—two hearts, one oath, and a future we would build from courage and grace."

A Portrait of Love:
Syd and Gina, newly wed and radiant in their shared joy.

petrified and would call me on the ward to chat to help her sleep. I don't think she would ever forget the night when she encountered a situation that scared her out of her wit.

I was on night duty when I received a telephone call from Gina and she sounded distressed, complaining that the tenant on the top floor had been knocking at her bedroom door asking to borrow matches to which she had responded she had none without opening the door. She became frightened, when the man tried to push on the door in an attempt to force it open, feeling sure he was trying to gain entry to attack her. After advising her to keep her door close, I rushed home. The next day, we reported the man to the landlady. This incidence obviously unsettled Gina to the point that we decided to move.✍

Goodbye, Swansea

We left Wales and settled in Kent, where I had secured a post as a Staff Nurse at Oakwood Hospital in Maidstone. The hospital provided us with Flat 3 in the Nurse's Quarters on Hermitage Lane. It was fully furnished, tastefully decorated, and equipped with all the necessary utilities. Best of all, there was no rent to pay. It felt like a blessing—until we received an unexpected shock.

Coral Wedding Anniversary

They say we live or die by the choices we make. On August 8th, 2016, Gina and I celebrated 46 years of marriage—having survived the infamous seven-year itch no fewer than six times. Speaking for myself, I believe I made the best possible choice in a life partner.

No one promised me a rose garden, and I never expected one. I knew from the start that marriage would require effort, and I continue to put in that work. I'm

"We left Swansea with hope in our pockets and found Kent waiting with keys and comfort—until the blessing blinked and the story turned."

"9B Rose Hill Terrace, Swansea—where Gina and I began our married life. A humble address, yet the foundation of our devotion. Two hearts under one roof, building a home from love, laughter, and dreams. Forever etched in the architecture of our story."

The seamstress who stitched Gina's wedding dress with care now prepares her for church—
hands steady, heart full.
Each gesture a quiet blessing, each fold of fabric a whisper of devotion. Grace in every touch,
memory in every thread.

Mrs. Assunta Scicluna giving her blessing to her daughter:

'Go my daughter and make it work for you.

Remember your vow:
to love and obey in sickness and in health;
for richer or poorer,
for better or worse.'

Gina, radiant in her wedding dress, stands between her father George and her mother Assunta. A daughter held in love, framed by the roots that raised her and the future she's stepping into. Pride and tenderness ripple through the moment—three hearts, one legacy, stitched into the fabric of that sacred day.

August 8th, 1970:
Our love sealed with a kiss, the first of many that would carry us through a lifetime of devotion.

Gina, kneeling gracefully in her wedding dress, receives heartfelt blessings from her father, George, and her mother, Assunta. A sacred moment where tradition meets tenderness—her parents' hands resting gently, their love flowing like a quiet prayer. She is wrapped in grace, devotion, and the strength of the roots that raised her, stepping into her new life with blessings stitched into every thread.

Young Evelyn, with gentle poise, offered her sister a few words of wisdom while handing her the bouquet. A quiet exchange wrapped in love and legacy—petals passed from one hand to another, carrying hope, memory, and the tender strength of sisterhood. In that moment, advice bloomed alongside flowers, and Gina stepped into her new beginning cradled by Evelyn's grace.

From left to right: Peter Said (my brother-in-law), George (my father-in-law), Evelyn (my sister-in-law), Gina in her wedding dress, Syd, and Mr. Spiteri, our Best Man. They stood together for a photo shoot—family and friendship gathered close, each face a thread in the tapestry of that sacred day. A portrait of joy, kinship, and love taking centre stage.

Young Anton Said, beaming with joy, wished Gina a long and happy married life. His words, simple and sincere, carried the lightness of youth and the weight of hope. A blessing wrapped in innocence, echoing into the tapestry of that sacred day.

Gina and Syd, side by side with Edwin—my brother-in-law and quiet witness to our unfolding joy. A moment of kinship, laughter, and love stitched into the day.

“Mrs. Chellen, may I have this dance?”
A whisper wrapped in promise, a step into forever.

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
You’ve walked through vows and memoir halls.
Threads of love, stitched deep and true,
Now beckon chapters bold and new.
A stage awaits, not just of wood,
But one where verse and legacy stood.
Your words will dance, your truth will shine,
In every line, your stars align.

“She never sought the spotlight, yet her presence lit every room. Her wisdom was quiet, but it echoed through our lives.”

sure Gina would agree: we wouldn't call ourselves a model couple. We've had our share of disagreements and moments when we came close to parting ways. But through it all, we've managed to navigate our differences and grow stronger together. Long may that continue.

Will we beat the world record for longest marriage, currently standing at 55 years? Only time will tell.

In August 2025, we will reach that milestone—our Emerald anniversary—and we look forward to celebrating it in our own modest way. And if we're fortunate enough to reach 60 years, we may even celebrate our Diamond anniversary and receive a congratulatory message from King Charles III.

Emerald Reflections

As we approach our Emerald anniversary—55 years of marriage—I find myself reflecting not just on the milestones, but on the quiet, ordinary days that stitched our life together. The laughter over burnt toast. The tears shared in silence. The way Gina's hand always found mine when words failed. These are the moments that don't make headlines, but they make a marriage.

We've weathered storms—some loud, some lingering. We've disagreed, disappointed, and forgiven. There were times when the silence between us felt like a canyon, and times when a single glance bridged it. Through it all, Gina remained my anchor, my compass, my unwavering star.

I often think back to that day in Qormi, when Gina walked down the aisle in her wedding dress—radiant and resolute. I remember the pride in her father's eyes, the quiet strength of her mother's blessing, and the absence of my own family—a silence louder than any church bell. Yet even then, I knew I wasn't alone. Gina stood beside me, and that made all the difference.

Our journey from Malta to Wales, and then to Kent, was more than geographical—it was emotional, spiritual, transformative. We built a life from scratch, with no blueprint but love and determination. Gina turned every flat into a home, every hardship into a lesson, and every ordinary day into something worth remembering.

"Like emerald, our love gleams with depth—thirty-five years carved in devotion, polished by time."

Now, as we stand on the threshold of 55 years, I marvel at the tapestry we've woven. It's not perfect—there are frayed edges and faded patches—but it's ours. Rich with memory, stitched with resilience, and dyed in the colours of devotion.

If we're blessed with another five years, we may reach our Diamond anniversary. And if King Charles III sends us a congratulatory message, it will be a lovely gesture. But truthfully, the greatest reward has already been given: a lifetime with Gina. A love that endured. A promise kept.

So here's to the next chapter—whatever it brings. Whether it's quiet mornings or unexpected adventures, I know one thing for certain: I'll face it with Gina by my side. And that, to me, is the truest definition of happily ever after.

Becoming Us

Marriage, in its early years, is often about adjustment—learning each other's habits, quirks, and silences. But over time, something deeper begins to form. Not just compromise, but communion. Not just routine, but ritual. Gina and I didn't just live together—we became a unit, a rhythm, a shared language.

We found joy in the ordinary. Gina had a way of turning the mundane into something meaningful. A simple meal became a celebration. A walk to the shops became a chance to talk about dreams. She brought colour to my world—not just in her laughter, but in the way she saw beauty in small things. A well-folded towel. A handwritten note. A vase of fresh flowers on a rainy day.

Work shaped us too. My role as a Staff Nurse demanded long hours and emotional resilience. Gina, ever supportive, never made me feel guilty for being tired. She understood the weight I carried and lightened it with her presence. She was my sanctuary, my sounding board, my reminder that love is not just felt—it's practiced.

We began to build traditions. Sunday mornings with music and tea. Anniversary dinners, no matter how modest. Letters to family, even when replies were rare.

Gina kept the flame of connection alive, even across oceans. Her devotion to family was unwavering, and through her, I learned that love stretches—it doesn't snap.

We also began to dream together. Not just about homes or holidays, but about legacy. Gina spoke often of writing—memoirs, poems, tributes. She wanted to capture the essence of our journey, not just for us, but for those who would come after. I admired that. She didn't just live life—she curated it. She honoured it.

There were challenges, of course. Times when we misunderstood each other. Times when silence felt safer than speech. But we always found our way back. Sometimes through laughter. Sometimes through tears. Always through love.

"Becoming us" wasn't a single moment—it was a thousand small ones. A look. A touch. A shared joke. A quiet forgiveness. And through it all, we became more than husband and wife. We became partners. Companions. Co-authors of a story still unfolding.

We became each other's mirror—not just reflecting, but revealing. Gina saw parts of me I hadn't named yet. She gave language to my quiet strengths, and grace to my rough edges. In her presence, I learned that vulnerability wasn't weakness—it was invitation. A way of saying, "Here I am. Will you stay?" And she always did.

Here we are in the back garden of our home on Bradbourne Lane, Larkfield, Kent—where love has taken root and memories bloom. The regal soul beside us is Princess Mimi, our beloved cat. To her, we owe not just our marriage, but the very shape of our lives.

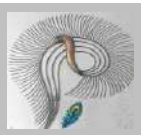
Our home became a canvas. Not grand, not perfect—but sacred. The walls held our laughter, our disagreements, our reconciliations. The kitchen echoed with music and memory. The hallway bore witness to late-night pacing, whispered reassurances, and the soft padding of our pets, who somehow knew when comfort was needed. Even the clutter had meaning—books half-read, notes half-written, dreams half-spoken but fully felt.

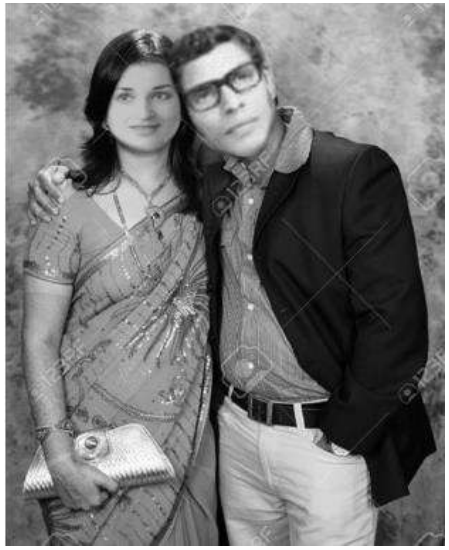
We marked seasons not just by calendars, but by emotional weather. The spring of renewal after a hard winter. The summer of ease, when everything felt light. The autumns, when we let go of old hurts and made space for new understanding. Even the winters had their beauty—quiet, stark, honest. We didn't fear the cold. We learned to light candles in it.

Now, when I look back, I don't see a timeline. I see a tapestry. Threads of joy, sorrow, growth, and grace. Each knot a moment we held on. Each colour a memory we dyed with care. And at the centre, always, is Gina—my muse, my anchor, my unwavering s tar.

"Becoming us" is still happening. With every word she says. With every story we tell. With every breath we take beside one another. We are not finished. We are unfolding.✍

"I didn't change to be accepted—I stood as I was, and love met me there. In a world that asked me to bend, I chose to stand. The blessing came not from baptism, but from belief: belief in our union, in our right to belong. Faith didn't divide us—it made room for our story to be sanctified, not by conformity, but by courage. I signed that paper not as a compromise, but as a promise: that our children would inherit love, legacy, and the freedom to choose their own path. That day, I said 'Yes I do'—to Gina, to grace, and to the life we dared to build together."





Here is a virtual styling of my wife, Gina and I in the back garden of our house at Brad-bourne lane, Larkfield, Kent. UK.

For GINA — For All You've Been

In quiet hours and louder days,
You stood where others might not stay.
Through tangled time and storms unplanned,
You held this married life with steady hands.

The bills were tight, the nights ran long,
And still you pressed through right and wrong.
Not once a word of blame you cast,
Just calm resolve that always lasts.

A mother's grace, a partner's fire,
You carry strength, you lift, inspire.
The meals, the mess, the midnight cries—
You met them all with open eyes.

You bore the weight that life let fall,
With aching feet, you stood so tall.
No sigh of grief, no fretful tone—
Just love that held the broken bone.

Not every path we walked was wide,
Yet there you were, right by my side.
With patient love that doesn't bend,
You chose my heart again, again.

And if I've faltered, missed the mark,
You lit the way through nights gone dark.
In all you've done, and all you do—
Our home, our life, is shaped by you.

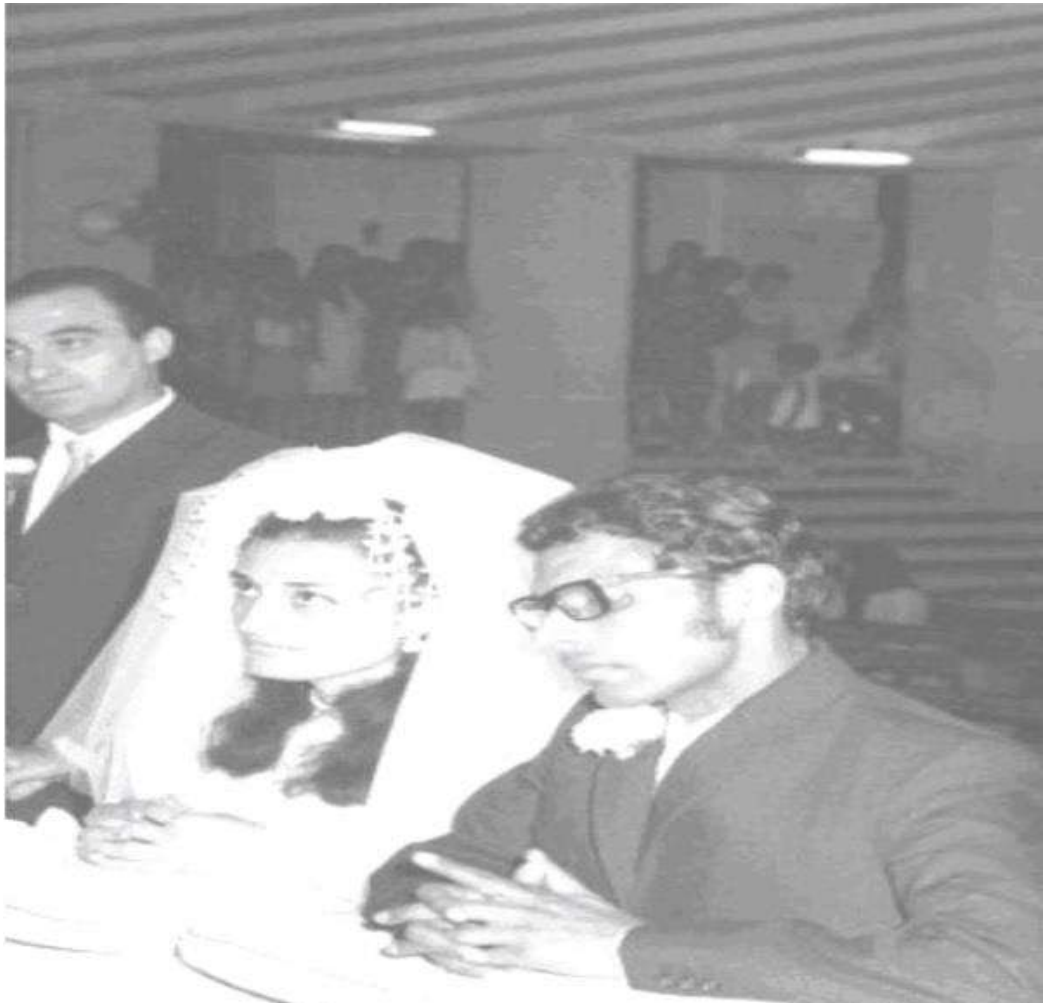
So here's my thanks, not just in word,
But in the quiet moments heard.
In every breath, in every part—
You are the rhythm of my heart.

And years from now, when age draws near,
Your grace will still be shining clear.
The echoes of your steady light
Will warm our days and guide what's right.

"She is my golden hour, my every day's sunrise. In this light, we became one—bound by vows, crowned in love. Not just a photo, but a portal to the day the stars aligned and called her mine. A tapestry of promises, stitched in gold—our forever, gilded in grace."

“The Peacock at My Threshold”

In my bedroom, a peacock gazes from the wall—silent, watchful, radiant. It doesn’t just hang; it waits.
There were years I folded my feathers close. Not in shame, but in caution. The world teaches some voices to whisper, and mine obeyed—softly, for a while.
But the peacock does not roar. It walks. It watches. And when the hour turns, it unfurls—a quiet thunder of colour, a truth shimmering in defiance. My life has held such thresholds: moments when silence tipped into spot-light, when hidden truths bloomed like jewelled eyes.
My story is my unfurling—not spectacle, but arrival. Each chapter a feather: delicate, deliberate, uncompromising. Together, they shape a train stitched from memory, and I walk forward knowing that every glint carries its own echo.



Beneath the soft glow of the altar lights, my wife and I knelt side by side, joined by my brother-in-law, as the priest delivered his heartfelt sermon. In that quiet, sacred moment, surrounded by love and faith, we felt the weight and beauty of the vows we were about to make. The photo captures not just a ceremony, but a blessing—a shared beginning, grounded in tradition and embraced by family.

My Everything
A family to
work for,
live for,
and—if fate demanded—

Chapter
Seven

The Family…

CHAPTER 7 — THE FAMILY, FRIENDSHIP, AND THE THREADS THAT BIND

"If you want your children to turn out well, spend twice as much time with them, and half as much money."

Marriage may begin with two people, but it's sustained by the invisible threads of family, friendship, and shared memory. As Gina and I settled into life in Kent, those threads began to weave themselves into our days—sometimes gently, sometimes urgently, always meaningfully.

We missed our families deeply. Gina often spoke of her siblings—Edwin and Joe, Mary and Evelyn—with a wistful warmth that made them feel present even in their absence. Her parents, George and Assunta, remained anchors in her heart. Though they were miles away, their influence was never far. I, too, carried the memory of my own family in Mauritius like a quiet ache—especially on birthdays, holidays, and those moments when a familiar dish or scent stirred something deep inside.

But life has a way of offering new connections. In Kent, we met neighbours who became confidants, colleagues who became companions, and strangers who, through kindness, became part of our story. Gina had a gift for turning acquaintances into friends—her warmth, wit, and unwavering loyalty made people feel seen. I watched her build bridges with grace, even when the world around us felt unfamiliar.

We began to create our own rituals: Sunday walks, shared meals, letters to loved ones. Gina decorated our flat with care, and in our later residence, we adopted the peacock motif as a symbol of our lifestyle. It was her way of stitching home into our new life.

There were challenges, of course—cultural differences, financial strains, the occasional pang of isolation. But we faced them together, sometimes with laughter, sometimes with tears, always with resolve. Gina's strength was quiet but fierce. She didn't just endure—she transformed. Every setback became a story, every hardship a lesson, every joy a celebration.

And then came the moments that truly defined us—not grand gestures, but small acts of devotion. The way Gina would wait up for me after a long shift. The way we'd hold hands in silence as we walked the streets, knowing that love doesn't always need words.

We were building something—not just a marriage, but a legacy. One rooted in resilience, shaped by memory, and nourished by the people who walked alongside us, whether near or far.

Our First Arrival

Given that our courtship had been brief and patchy, Gina and I decided—once married—to make up for lost time. We wanted to enjoy "us" first, sort out our careers, and then start a family. If only life were that simple, it would have been the perfect plan. Young, inexperienced, and determined, we rushed forward, ignoring any flaws in our roadmap.

In line with our goals, Gina enrolled in a midwifery course at Mount Pleasant Hospital in Swansea, South Wales, while I prepared for my final exam to qualify as a psychiatric nurse. Every spare moment was spent together. From the outside, it looked idyllic: I was married to a beautiful woman, had a steady job, and was on the cusp of a promising career. What could possibly go wrong? But as the saying goes, "*Man proposes God disposes*."

One month after our wedding, the unexpected occurred—Gina was pregnant with our first child. It should have been the happiest news, and in many ways, it was. But it disrupted our carefully laid plans. After reflecting and weighing our options, we chose to accept what we saw as God's will. I've always believed that life is a journey toward God, and you need not fear the path when you know He walks with you.

Of course, this meant Gina had to abandon her studies and take on the role of full-time mother, while I had to work twice—sometimes three times—as hard to provide for our growing family.

Working harder didn't frighten me. What people didn't know was that I harboured a quiet fear. I had sat my exam and was anxiously awaiting the results. I was petrified. I knew I'd given it my best, but was it enough? A positive result meant job security, a better income, and the chance to request a hospital house. Gina hated Rose-Hill Terrace—the flat we lived in—and this could be our ticket to somewhere safer, somewhere better.

So there I was, sitting by the window, waiting for the postman. He was usually prompt. He'd delivered many letters before—mostly bills or junk. I never rushed to collect them. But that day, I was waiting for something different. A letter that could make or break me.

As I sat there, my mind raced. My heart pounded. I could barely breathe. I was consumed by fear and anxiety. What was happening to me?

It was 10 a.m. and the postman should have come by now. Why did he choose that very day to be late? I glanced at my watch and when I lifted my head again I saw the postman walking towards the letter box with a white envelope in his hand and moments later he dropped through the aperture of the mailbox.

Suddenly Gina came into the bedroom where I was. Knowing that I had been waiting for my results, she said, 'Hasn't the postman arrived yet?'

'Yes. I just saw him drop a white envelope in the letter box.'

'Aren't you going to get it?'

'Erm… I don't know if I should,' I replied softly.

'I'll go,' she said and she ran downstairs to fetch it.

I had expected her to open it but she was too polite to do so as it was not addressed to her. When she re-entered the room, as she stretched her hand to hand it to me, I stretched mine and took it from her.

Without opening the envelope I held it close to my heart. I knew the letter was from the General Nursing Council because I had previously supplied them with a self-addressed stamped envelope. Therefore, it was easy for me to guess what was inside. The only mystery was what was inside.

'Go on, open it,' Gina encouraged me.

I shook my head, and then I handed the envelope back to her and said, 'You open it, please.'

As she did so and pulled out an A4 sheet of paper, I told her to wait as I did not want her to read it before I felt ready to listen. I took a deep breath and then signalled to her to read.

'Dear Mr. Chellen, I have the pleasure…'

I quickly interrupted her, 'Stop I yelled.'

At that point, I knew I had passed. I jumped up and down feeling quite euphoric. I quickly calmed myself down. I needed to hear the full content of the letter, maybe because I feared a sting in the tale, so I told Gina to read the first line again, which she did and then she continued to read the rest of the letter.

There are no words to describe the joy I felt learning I had passed my exam and I was allowed to register as a State Psychiatric Nurse. To say I was over the moon is an understatement. Nevertheless, I was, for two reasons: Firstly, all my hard work and sacrifices thus far had paid off, and secondly given that I had just become a family man, it was important I had a secure career to provide the very best environment money could buy for my daughter to grow.

It meant goodbye Rose-Hill terrace. I wasted no time applying for a post as a staff nurse in Oakwood Hospital, Maidstone Kent. My application was successful. With the post was an offer of a hospital flat in the Nurses' Home. One little detail I'd omitted to tell the power to be was that my wife was pregnant. ✍

Fighting the Establishment

It was 1971 when my wife and I made the move and we settled ourselves into the Nurses' Home. It was a much better accommodation than the one we were in previously. No weirdoes were living in the home—only professional people, but no married couple except us, which appeared rather strange to the other occupants. Whilst the hospital authority felt it was okay for a married couple to stay in that building, they frowned on couples with children.

When Gina went to the hospital to have her baby, I had an unexpected visit from a Nursing Officer by the name of Mrs. Upton informing me that Gina would not be allowed back to the flat with the baby. This effectively meant we could not continue to stay in that building. Needless to say, I was shocked and angry. Nowhere in the information the hospital had given me, did this clause and I felt we were being unfairly evicted. Could it be I had jumped from the frying pan into

the fire, I asked myself? Had I known that children were not allowed, I would have thought twice before accepting the post. It became evident I had a battle in my hands and I knew, not only did I have to fight it out, but I had to win.

When later on that day I visited Gina in the hospital she could see I was troubled.

'Hey, what's up,' she asked.

As the baby had not arrived yet, I did not want to answer because I feared the effect bad news could have on her. I refrained from telling her the truth even though I could see the look of concern on her face and how furious she would be with me when she got to know the facts. All I ended up saying was that I was apprehensive for her, which was true but what was preoccupying my mind was where she would live after the baby is born?

I forced myself to appear calm, although I wasn't. It was one of those moments where you are so scared you can't even scream. I felt as if I was paralysed. In the end, the truth has a way of surfacing. Fortunately, in my case, when it did, the baby had arrived and both mother and baby were doing fine.

When I saw my first newborn in the cot, it was then that it truly dawned on me I was a father. I felt so lucky that I had two beautiful women in my life— my daughter and my loving wife.

No sooner had my wife and daughter been discharged from the maternity ward, against deep opposition from Oakwood Hospital Management who were bent on evicting us, than I brought them back to the flat. I knew the hospital management could not just throw my family and me on the street. In an attempt to appear reasonable, I was given one month to find an alternative lodging. Reasonable? Of course it was not!

Despite being assisted in finding a suitable place, I was unable to do so. I continued to fight my case. Everyone told me that if I did not leave I faced getting the sack. Foolish as it sounds; at the time this did not appear to frighten me. I had always believed that there are times in life when it is necessary to fight fire with fire. I was not going to allow myself to succumb to their pressures. After taking legal advice, I wrote a letter to the Hospital Management Committee accusing them of lacking compassion, misinformation and bullying. Whilst waiting for a response, I became concerned for the safety of my wife and child.

Photo taken in the back garden at Oakwood Nurse's Home. The building has since been pulled down and replaced with flats

Luckily, a good friend of mine gave my wife and daughter shelter for three days. Preparing for the worst, I made arrangements for both of them to fly to Malta and be with my in-laws.

Once I knew my wife and daughter were safe and in good company, I continued my search for a suitable place to live so that I could be reunited with them.

Within a month, after reviewing my case, the Hospital Management Committee offered me a hospital house. And to help me manage the increased rent, I was promoted to a Deputy Charge nurse pushing up my salary.

I was chuffed! The enemy was defeated. The battle was won. There was no further need for me to search for a place to live. I could bring my wife and child back and live as a family again. However, I was not content with renting, especially one that was owned by the Hospital, because should I one day, God forbid, get the sack I would not only lose my job but lose my house as well. I considered that it would have been double jeopardy for me. The best way forward was to buy a small place and that would not only get me on the property ladder it would also be a place we could call home. As it so happened, all my searches had not been in vain. An Estate Agent sent me the details of a nice two-bedroom terraced house at 18, St George's Square, Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent. Although the house was over a hundred years old, it was amazingly in good condition. It was on sale for £4000. In 1970, that was a lot of money. I did not have that kind of fund to buy it outright so we looked into the option of taking a mortgage. Little did we know that the rules at the time allowed us to borrow only 90% of the total purchase price! The building society was willing to lend me £3500 but I still needed to find the other 10%, that is, £500 to put down as a first payment, which I did not have.

Hesitantly, I turned to my father-in-law and he came to my rescue. We were on the property ladder, be it the first run.

A little palace

The house needed some attention like a full damp course treatment, rewiring and decorating. Until that point, I had no DIY skills. I knew nothing about wallpapering or painting. I had never done either before. With the help of a Samaritan friend, I learned fast.

Soon, I was ripping the old flooring out of the bedrooms, stairs and sitting room replacing them with new carpet. Next to go out was that tatty vinyl dining room floor. I recovered it with a cushion floor. The ceiling and walls in the bathroom, all the doors and windows in the house and the cellar needed attention. So they were next to get the Syd's treatment and care.

Well, you can't live in an empty house. So I went to Woodhouse furniture store

Taken on August 1978. Photographer Val Vencatachellum.

My first home, 18 St. Georges square,
Maidstone, Kent.
I paid £4000 for it and eventually sold it for £20,000. Yes, it's me on the ladder. I did have a head,
i.e. until the photographer decided I would be better off without it.

▶ *Here we are with our first born, Patricia. Gina taking her for a stroll in the ground of the Nurses Home, Oakwood Hospital, Maidstone, Kent. The Health Authority provided us with a two-bedroom hospital flat.*

▶ 1970. *Here I am doing my little bit of parenting!* My beautiful baby Patricia resting in my arms

Beneath the shelter of an old tree, Gina cradles our firstborn—roots above, legacy beginning below. A quiet moment where love took shape in her arms and the world felt newly blessed.

and bought a double bed, a dining room suite, a cooker, a spin dryer, a small fridge, a three-piece suite, a coffee table for the sitting room and a few kitchen utensils. I can't remember how much that lot came to, but they were all bought on hire purchase. I wanted to make the house as presentable as I could before bringing my family back to live in it.

Since we were starting from scratch, as soon as Gina had arrived there was still more shopping to do. Having made her shopping list, off to the shops we went. We visited two large shopping stores: Woodhouse and Curry's. They were willing to give us the items we needed on credit with the agreement that we would pay back the loan in three years. We filled the shopping trolley with a heater, a couple of pots and pans, a couple of plates, a pair of spoons, forks and knives and two mugs.

Having sold my soul to the devil all I had to do was to work all the hours God sent to pay the double loan.

However, now I had a place where I could house my wife and daughter. It was only a poor man's castle, but it was my home, bought and paid for courtesy of my father-in-law, the shopping centres and loan companies!

Because it was an old house it was not very well insulated. The one heater we had was not enough to heat the all house. Most of the heat was escaping underneath the doors. We could hear the wind whistling. The house was so cold that we would go to bed early and cuddle up to each other under layers of blankets. In the morning I had to get up ready for work. The bathroom was cold. One could see the condensation running down the wall. Somehow, we survived.

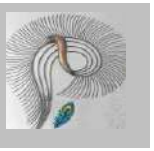
For thirteen long years, we lived in that house. Slowly, my wife had turned it into a little palace. I continued to work as hard as I could, very often long hours in order to make ends meet. There was that hire purchase for the furniture to pay back, not to mention the mortgage, and bills for necessities, schooling and so on.

After all the bills were paid there was nothing left for entertainment! But as long as we owed nobody and we did not, and I was making regular payments on what I owed, I was happy and so was my wife, I believe!

By the time I'd finished paying the shops what I owed them, including the added interest, the items I'd bought had cost me almost twice as much. ✍

◀ *Patricia showing off her Christmas present in our lounge at 18 St Georges square.*

"Patricia was once the weight of my palm, now she's the light in every room—and I watch her grow not to hold her back, but to remember how love teaches us to let go."



Patricia growing up…

I took a very keen interest in my daughter. I wanted her to grow up into the most beautiful girl the world had ever seen. Indeed my wife entered her in a baby competition and surprisingly she won the most beautiful baby of the year.

Coming from an underprivileged background, I knew what it was like to be poor - not to have the things other kids have. So I was determined that my daughter would have a better life. To give my family a better chance, I decided to take a second job 30 miles away from home. It meant that sometimes I had to work for days with only two hours' sleep in between. I would come home after a long morning shift, sleep in the chair for 2 hours and then take the train to get to another hospital in Canterbury, a town 30 miles away from my home, to start a night shift. Then I would take the train back in the morning to start another long morning shift. There were bills to be paid, so the money had to come from somewhere. It was a question of burning the candle at both ends. ✍

Then came David…

One morning my wife started feeling sick. Soon it became apparent that she was

David Andrew and Patricia, caught in the magic of Christmas morning—unwrapping gifts with wide eyes and full hearts, as laughter and paper filled the room like snowflakes of joy...

David Andrew, taking his first steps with his mum's eady hands guiding him— ile Patricia watches, wide- yed and proud. A moment where love moved gently orward, one step at a time.

pregnant again. Before I knew it my first son, David, was born.

Now there were more mouths to feed. One way or another we managed. Whatever the case may be, I was determined to make sure that my wife and children never went short of anything, as long as I could help it. I knew I was already lucky to have a wife who knew how to economise and she never asked for much. Despite the struggle, I was proud of my family and I wanted them to be proud of me. Yes, that's all I ever wanted. Was I asking too much?

When I arrived in London, on April 3rd 1967, I had hardly any money in my pocket and a small suitcase containing very little. I even nearly lost all these on the train. But I had many dreams. The primary dream was to have a family that would look up to me, and love me as much as I love them. Be willing to die for me as I would for them! Little did I know I was deceiving myself!✍

Making dreams come true…

As the years went by, I was slowly fulfilling my dreams. My children were growing up, my marriage looked rock solid, my job was secured, and I had loads of energy and motivation. I somehow naively believed that when I get old I would be in good hands. I wish my children would see it as their turn to invest time in my wife and me.

As well as bringing up a family I was also continuing with my education, for that was the way I could see of improving my position on the social ladder. ✍

Making ends meet

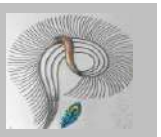
I usually worked a morning shift (7 a.m. to 2 p.m.) or an afternoon shift (1 p.m. to 9 p.m.) Getting to work in the morning meant getting up at 5.30 a.m. taking a quick wash and then running to the bus stop to catch the 6 o'clock bus. This was not too bad. However, during the winter period, when it was snowing, getting a bus was quite difficult. Very often I had to walk to work. I figured a car could become quite handy. But where would the money come from? My wage did not permit such luxury. If I were to be able to afford one I needed a bigger income.

▶ *David and Patricia at Xmas. I never had presents. My mother could not afford them. I used to envy all my friends who will come out at Xmas time playing with their fancy toys brought to them by father Xmas. I could not understand why that mysterious father Xmas never visited me! At times like that I could not help feeling like Cinderella. I wondered why I could not have been born in a rich family like my friend Jacaria. His parents were filthy rich, but he was not very brilliant. We were in the same class at school. I would help him do his homework and in return he would give me some of his unwanted toys. Sometimes he will take me to his house where I would help myself with unlimited bottle of cokes. What a great guy!*

Xmas a day for joys

I was already working two jobs—during the day I was working in one hospital, and then moonlighting in another. To earn extra cash I increased the hours I was working, which meant I got to see even less of my David and Patricia. To give legitimacy for not being around, I told myself that they had their mummy 24 hours a day to take care of them; therefore it was not a big deal if I was not

"David may learn differently, but he teaches me daily—about patience, courage, and the kind of love that rewrites every definition of strength."



Gina making a trifle for Patricia and David in the tiniest kitchen—just 6x9 feet, yet somehow the warmest place in the house. A bathroom and a small toilet were bolted to its side, and every morning at 5am, I'd tiptoe in, bracing for the chill. But here, in this snug corner of our lives, love simmered, laughter echoed, and desserts were made with devotion.

Here I am relaxing in the lounge in our first house at 18 St. Georges Square, Maidstone. Kent

around as much as I should have been. I continuously reassured myself that they would understand. Wrong! Of course, they did not. That error of judgement and assessment of the situation on my part was a bomb waiting to explode. For, whilst I was busying myself with earning enough cash to make headway, my two children were growing up. More and more, they were seeing very little of me to the point that I was silently becoming an insignificant part of their lives. Inevitably they became more attached to their mum. By the time I had realised the error of my ways and tried to make it up to them, it was too late. They had already got used to being without me. I had feared that this fatal error would one day come to bite me in the behind. It was just a matter of time!✍

Morris Marina

I finally did get my first car—a beautiful Morris Marina. Both Gina and I were so delighted with it. We could go out regardless of the weather. No more pushing the pram or carrying bags of shopping on the bus. No more standing on the bus stop freezing to the bone. Gina took pleasure and pride in washing and polishing it for me every weekend. We became the third person in our street to own a car. How could I not be content with the way my life was developing?✍

A change of career

Having completed my training in General nursing at a local hospital called West Kent General, I was promoted to a Charge Nurse. Three years later I was offered the opportunity to take further study on full pay with the guarantee of a post as a Clinical Tutor on my return. A move that was going to change my life for the better, the breakthrough I needed.

Alas, that took me away from my family once more. This time I was living away from home for months, although I visited them on some weekends. After I'd completed that course I took up a new role in the School of Nursing. A year later I was off again on another course, this time, for one full year. ✍

▲ *Syd, Gina, David and Patricia*

▼*My first car.*
I paid £700 for it.
To buy it I worked 945 hours of night duty to amass that amount of money.
It has a K registration license plate.
This was quite appropriate, because I felt like a King driving it.
To inflate my ego further, I made the BPN an acronym for

B*est*
P*sychiatric*
N*urse.*

Finally came Maurice…

Back came the morning sickness. By now I knew what it meant. Yes, you guessed it. My wife informed me that she was expecting again. It came as a shock because she was supposed to be on the pill. We really could not afford another child, but since it was God's gift, we accepted the situation. It was going to be yet another boy to fly the Chellens' flag.

Our two-bedroom house in St George's Square was too small for us. The house, which we bought for £4000, was now worth around £20,000 with a remaining mortgage of £3500. Our monthly outgoing for the mortgage was

As soon as my teaching course was over, I was promoted to a Nurse Tutor. One day Gina and I were walking in Maidstone town centre. On impulse, we went into an Estate agent and decided to sell our two-bedroom terrace house and buy a three-bedroom semi-detached. We viewed several houses and finally found one at No. *2, Bradbourne Lane, Ditton, Kent*. It was a newly built three-bedroom semi-detached (end of terrace) house. The insulation was great. The rooms were quite big and there was a decent garden. It was going for £25,000. We could barely afford it. It worked out that if we bought it we would have almost nothing left out of my income (which was the only income) after paying all the bills. As we needed the space, we went ahead with the house purchase.

then I had acquired some skills in gardening, laying bricks and paving. I began to put those skills to work and sort the garden. I created a patio so that we could sit outside when the weather was good and also the children could play around on their bikes or with their toys. At the deep end of the garden, I fixed a swing. Whenever I had some thinking to do or felt in a reflective mood, I would go into the garden, sit on the swing and reminisce or dream about the things I would like to achieve and how I could make those dreams come true.

bad luck would have it, my *Morris Marina* decided to die on me. Hence, the car also needed changing. So out went the old and in came the red VW Derby-S✍

On the move again

Once we had moved into the house at Bradbourne Lane, we discovered that after paying all the bills, all we had left in the kitty to spend on other necessities such as entertainment, clothes etc. was £5. I was already working long hours doing two jobs. Gina wanted to go to work to boost our income. I just would not hear of it. I was brought up to believe that if a man cannot support his family he was not fulfilling his responsibilities. In our household, my wife and I had a strict division of labour. She did the housework and looked after the kids, and I went to work and brought in the bacon.

One day she had gone out and when she returned home she told me that someone had offered her a part-time job and she wanted to take it. She argued that she did not like the idea of taking money from me to buy gifts for Christmas, birthdays and other special occasions. I think secretly she saw that as an opportunity to meet people and make friends. After lots of discussions and considerations, I finally, reluctantly agreed that she took the job but I made it very clear to her that working did not mean that I would relieve or assist her with her household responsibilities. For a while, she did both but eventually I decided to offer her some assistance whenever I could or felt like it. Increasingly I became more domesticated and I have been known to help her with washing the dishes, making the beds

My second car… a VW Derby S. As I was now a Nurse Tutor, it was fitting that the registration plate reflected that. So the XMT stood for

Xcellent
Male
Teacher.

Next to the car is my son, Maurice Valentino Chellen.

and even doing a little hoovering. Who said a leopard can't change its spots?✍

Maurice growing up…

Maurice was growing up fast. No sooner had we moved into No.2, *Bradbourne Lane*, than he gave us the biggest fright of our lives. My wife had left him sleeping in one of the upstairs bedrooms. We were watching television in the lounge downstairs. We heard a murmuring sound outside the lounge window. On investigation, we were shocked to find it was Maurice on the ground. As there was no safety lock in the upstairs window, Maurice had pushed it open and in so doing followed through. How he missed the paving, we will never know, and he did so by a whisker. Consequently, he fell on the grass and escaped uninjured. Needless to say, we immediately fitted all upstairs windows with safety locks✍

It is amazing how things tend to get pear-shaped at the most awkward time. Then, this is the story of my life! Whilst driving home one night down the M4 in my VW Derby-S, a gigantic lorry overtook me and waved me to stop. I was scared and hesitated for a moment before I decided to pull my car onto the hard shoulder and bring it to a standstill. Fortunately, I did that. The lorry driver had spotted that my car was spitting fire. After my car was parked on the reservation lane, he shined his beam light underneath my car and we noticed that oil was dripping from the engine onto the hot exhaust pipe. We gave the exhaust a good wipe and I then drove the car slowly home. The next day, on impulse, I went to a car dealer and part-exchanged it for a VW Passat. I came home and told Gina what I had done. She started crying.

'Why did you do that?'

'Why are you so distressed about it?'

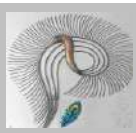
I could not understand the reason. It finally transpired that she loved that Derby-S so much that she did not want it to leave the family. The next day I went to buy back the Derby-S, but the Salesman wanted me to give him one and a half times the price he gave me for it. I told him to go and jump in the river and he walked out feeling quite furious.

Three weeks later a guy rang me and was asking me questions about the Derby-S. It appeared that the car dealer had sold the Derby-S to that guy's daughter. Whilst she was driving it one day, it caught fire. Luckily she managed to stop and get out of the car to take cover.

The VW Passat was a welcoming newcomer. Gina did take a fancy to her and named her 'Duchess'. She took great pride in washing and cleaning her every weekend. I drove her for eleven years. She served me well until one day in 1999, when my brother Marday and his wife were guests in my house; she gave me cause for concern. Whilst driving my guests around in Kent, the rear bumper fell off and got crushed by another vehicle. I could not understand why. Later on, I found out that Maurice having noticed it was loose made a bold attempt to fix it. He did not do a good job! By then, it was time for someone else to take care of our Duchess. I sold her to a friend, much to the disapproval of Gina. ✍

◀ *Maurice with his mum in the back garden at 18 St. Georges Square, Maidstone. Kent.*

"Some cars come and go like chapters in a book, but Duchess was a whole volume—polished with pride, driven with love, and retired with a sigh. Even her farewell had a touch of drama, just like the best of us."



During a crisp afternoon visit to Rajen Vencatachellum at Seven Sisters, Gina, Patricia, Maurice, and David couldn't resist the chance to show off our beloved VW Derby S. Gleaming in the sun-light, the car drew admiring glances as it rolled up—it's retro charm and polished chrome a testament to years of care and pride. The group, animated and full of stories, gathered around the vehicle like it was a fifth companion, each one recounting memories tied to its rumbling engine and unmistakable silhouette. That day wasn't just about a visit—it was a celebration of friendship, nostalgia, and the joy of sharing something special with someone who understood its value.

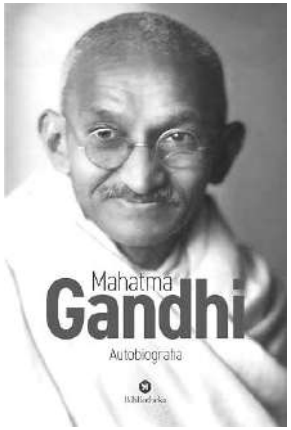
Greeting the Duchess!

The Duchess.

To remember the suffix letters of the registration plate, I coined the phrase:

***W**illie*
***K**ing*
***J**ohn.*

▼From left to right:
Syd, Gina, Maurice, David



"Let the first act of every morning be to make the following resolve for the day:

I shall not fear anyone on Earth.
I shall fear only God.
I shall not bear ill will toward anyone.
I shall not submit to injustice from anyone.
I shall conquer untruth by truth. And in resisting untruth, I shall put up with all suffering."

Mahatma Gandhi

In pursuit of justice

Nobody can give you freedom, equality or justice. If you want it, you must act as a man and be prepared to fight for it at any cost. That's how my mind has functioned and will continue to do so.

After Maurice was born, my wife, Gina, went in hospital for a partial hysterectomy. We were told it was a routine operation and therefore there was nothing much to worry about and we believed it. But it turned out to be the beginning of a nightmare, which was to affect our lives forever.

August 1978

— Patricia, the quiet centre of a summer's frame, held between generations and grace. Kirsten leans gently on her left, her mother anchors her on the right, and Emma completes the constellation of women who shaped her world. A moment etched in time, flanked by love, memory, and the soft echo of friendship.

Unknown to us, the surgeon who carried out the operation tied her left ureter. Something we later on learnt was a rare complication. After months of pain, her left kidney atrophied and eventually it had to be surgically removed.

The trauma of having lost a perfectly healthy kidney, affected Gina's mood. She was no more the cheerful, happy go lucky woman I had married. She became more and more withdrawn and self-centred. Our relationship began to take a beating. My Gina began to displace her rage on me. She was full of bitterness and anger, partly towards the hospital surgeon who let her down and partly because she felt I was not being supportive enough. She became so embroiled in herself to the extent that she had little time for us. All she could think of was revenge and she wanted me to be her avenger. After exploring the strength of her case with a solicitor and weighing the pros and cons, I decided to file a law suit against the hospital for medical negligence.

This was to be the 'make or break' of me. I felt it was better to lose all and save character, for character is itself a fortune.

Everyone who knew of my intention thought I was crazy taking on a hospital to task, but for me helping my wife to regain her sanity and a sense of justice was more important than any material wealth. I loved my wife from the moment I saw her and I was not going to stop. Without her, I knew my life would be unbearable.

I engaged a solicitor and committed every single penny we had saved, which turned out not to be a lot, thus forcing me to further pledge the house we were living in to pay for the legal fees. Medical bills and other unplanned expenses began to eat up any remainder of my monthly earnings.

England is a good place to be if you want to fight for justice but you'd do well to be very rich, then you can pay the lawyer's fee or be very poor then the Legal Aid Department would pay.

Although my wife was not earning much we were deemed by the power to be, not to be entitled for legal aid simply because my income happened to fall in the middle range bracket. So the world let me get on with it whilst it stood by and watched. Working colleagues, friends and one or two relations told me to let it go.

'You can't take on a big organisation. This is foolish,' they say.

'You are crazy to think you can win,' said another.

'What madness possesses you to think you can win this case?' said yet another.

Patricia, radiant in white, dressing for her first communion—her small hands smoothing lace, her heart learning the language of devotion. Wrapped in anticipation and grace, she steps softly into a rite of passage, held by innocence, memory, and the quiet pride of becoming.

I looked at them with disdain and wondered if they were in my situation and felt what I was feeling, would they think and act differently?

I knew it was a long road to travel on my own but it was one I had to. It was the only one right thing to do. I hired one of the best legal firm money could buy; the bill for solicitors alone was £112 for every ten minutes of face-to-face conversations.

At a time like this, I did not want to be surrounded by doubters and wavers. I needed every member of my family to put their personal interest aside and pull together. After all, this is what a family is for. As they say:

"One for all and all for one."

It was time to rally my children and told them what was going on. I naturally expected everyone to be on board and do their bits to keep the family together. Unfortunately, that was like asking too much.

Events took over so suddenly and I saw all my dreams turning into nightmares. It became a struggle to keep my emotion and my wit in check. I found myself struggling to fulfil my roles as a husband, father, and breadwinner. As my wife was so preoccupied with her own health, she could not fulfil her role as a mother and wife. I had to cover for her. For eight long troublesome years my wife and I struggled together to stay the course of our protracted court case, whilst upholding our joint responsibilities towards our children.

Despite our financial difficulties, we did not want to compromise our children's education. It was time for my daughter to pursue a university education. One way or another I was determined to support her whilst she went to Oxford for a university degree. I had quietly hoped that on her return she would be able to work and help us get through our troubles. Unfortunately whilst she was at University she grew brains. After four and a half years away, she graduated and returned home. Within weeks she was offered a job as a schoolteacher. As we were still struggling with our court case and it continued to drain away every penny we had, I thought to myself that with my daughter back home and working we should experience less financial hardship.

Having Patricia back in our midst was so nice. Our family was complete again. We were once again a unified force ready to crush any enemies that dared cross our path. Both my wife and I had been counting the days for that moment.

As Gina was still not coping well emotionally we needed every bit of help we could get. Patricia's presence did indeed fill the gaps and added a ray of sunshine and a breath of fresh air in our lives. Unfortunately, that only lasted for three months! Admittedly it was the best three months of our lives.

As providence will have it, my daughter and I had a disagreement and we fell out badly with each other. The atmosphere in our home suddenly became unbearable. The tension, which existed at the time had reached melting point. One evening my daughter took off. That was the doomsday of my life. Since that day, my family has never been the same and that was the day when the 'J' in 'Joy' went out of my life.

My house in Bradbourne Lane became like a morgue, haunted with bad memories. As we really had no one to turn to, David, Maurice, Gina and I kept our feelings to ourselves. We would barely talk to each other. Despite what was going on, Gina and I honoured our married vows and we continued to support each other in all circumstances. We carried on fighting our court case and struggled to cope with our day to day obligations.

'Mrs. Chellen, you are one case I badly want to win,' said the lawyer working for us.

However, the other side was determined to thwart our efforts. They started by giving me the run around in the hope that I would be discouraged and give up my fight. Little did they know that there was no chance of that, because I was perhaps crazy as someone had previously described me? I had committed myself to this legal fight and I was not going to let go until my dying breath. Talk about cut off your nose to spite your face, I had more sense than that, but there was no denying that I had taken a high-risk course of action.

After eight years of waiting, the Court gave us a date to appear in front of the Judge. The preliminary hearing was to take place over a period of one week. Two days before the hearing the opposing side wanted to talk an out of court settlement. Immediately they had made their first offer, my solicitor turned it down. On the day the hearing was going to start, we were made a second improved offer to settle the case and on advice of counsel we turned it down.

The tension was mounting. Gina and I were getting ready to make our way to the court house. I began to feel nervous. .

My pulse was racing. The phone rang again and I rushed to pick up the receiver. My hand was trembling. Whilst holding the phone to my ear, I remember looking in the direction of my wife. She was sitting on the edge of the bed, her hand locked together resting on her lap, and she was fidgeting with her fingers.

I could hear the voice on the other end of the phone asking, 'Is that you Mr. Chellen?'

It was of course, the voice of my trusted solicitor.

'Yes, it's me,' I replied, feeling slightly choked.

'Are you okay?'

'Sort of.'

'And your wife?'

'She looks nervous to me.'

There was a slight pause. 'The other side has made their third and final offer…,' the solicitor said.

There was only two hours left before the court session was due to start.

'…and I recommend that you take it.'

I took another look at my wife and I just could not put her through the trauma of a court case. I decided to take the recommendation of the solicitor and settled the case out of court.

Thank God, after eight long years, we had finally won. I immediately relayed the news to Gina. This much-needed win had a positive therapeutic effect on her emotional state.

Soon after, she picked herself up, but, in reality there was nothing much to cheer, because our family was in disarray. There was a big void in our midst, left there by our missing daughter.

It is said that time is a great healer, but for us, days, weeks, months, and even years passed us by and we continued to struggle to live with our sadness. I was jumping from one wreck to another. In many ways it was strangely funny, because when I was only seventeen years old, still living in Mauritius, I'd collaborated with a colleague and wrote a novella entitled: WRECKAGE. It was of

◀▲ *Princess Mimi Chellen, born on 2nd June, 1997, cuddling up to Gina and David and she never missed an opportunity to hug and hold.*

course a fiction then but what was happening to me was no fiction!

In 1998, I felt it was time to exorcise the ghost and free us from those impossible nightmares we had been suffering. I finally decided to sell the house in Bradbourne lane and move to Ditton Place with what was left of my family.

When we had bought No. 2 Bradbourne lane, it was the 3rd house we had looked at. We loved it very much. We reluctantly sold it to raise the required capital to buy No. 1, Ditton Place. To bring colour back into our lives, Gina and I decided to name our new home "Chamarel House".

Although No. 2, Bradbourne lane became haunted for us, in many ways we left behind many happy memories too. This was the house where my mother came to spend some time during her first and only visit to England. Sadly, after the disappearance of my daughter the situation had become such that I had to run away to a new place under the sun. ✍

Our saviour

Although my wife loves animals, she always objected to us having any at home. Whilst house hunting we saw a beautiful kitten and on impulse we decided to buy her instead for £25 and named her Princess Mimi. This was the best £25 we ever spent. My wife and I needed something or someone to fill the emptiness in our hearts. Princess Mimi did that better than we could ever have expected. Both Gina and I began to derive emotional comfort from Princess Mimi. She became the focus and the subject of our daily conversations. Our pains and tribulations began to subside. The atmosphere in our new home started to improve.

It is said that '*A house without a cat is not a home'*, to us this could not be truer. Sadly, eleven years later, in March 2009, our beautiful Princess was diagnosed with heart and kidney failure. Unable to eat for 19 days, took only sips of water and she could hardly walk. She became quite withdrawn and began to hide from us as if she wanted to spare us the pain of seeing her in the state she was. It was hard when on 15th April, 2009 at 6 p.m. we had decided to put her to rest. Our little princess was a big part of our family. We decided to give her a send off fit for a princess. I constructed a small coffin and lined it with white satin linen and

Some memorable moments.

after the wake we buried her in the garden underneath the patio on 16th April, 2009 at 4.00 p.m. Inside her coffin we placed her favourite toys and my children, wife and I wrote her little messages telling her how she will be missed. My wife and I mourned her for a year before getting two Birman kittens. Later on I erected a tomb head engraved with an epitaph and placed the stone against the wall in our back garden in close proximity where we had laid her to rest. On each anniversary of her death, my wife would place some flowers in a jar near her tomb stone.

One morning, I was still in bed, I heard Gina shouting my name whilst rushing upstairs to the bedroom. As she entered the room, she was waving a postcard. Before I had chance to ask her what the matter was, she exclaimed:

'Syd, our daughter is married.'

I do not know what my wife expected me to say or feel at the time, but as I heard that news I suddenly felt a weight lifted from my heart and mind. To the astonishment of my wife, I appeared unmoved. I could not help noticing the tears running down her cheeks as she sat at the edge of the bed trembling. I put my left arm around her shoulder, and we stayed speechless for a while. Then I said to her:

'I*t is so strange, because today I feel so relieved. Now I can rest my mind knowing that my daughter has restored her honour*.'

Since my daughter had disappeared from our home at Bradbourne lane, we did not know where she was. I felt she was vulnerable and powerless. Not knowing her whereabouts and how she was coping plagued my mind. Although a few days after she had left we had received a message (apparently) from her that she will never come back, we had always prayed that after a period of reflection she would reconsider her position and our feelings. Had that been the case, what a difference this could have made!

Each day I would drive to work but my mind would be in turmoil. I remember talking to a priest about the way I was feeling. I don't think he really understood me! Although his kind words did not help but he suggested that perhaps my wife and I should take ourselves on a pilgrimage to Lourdes**,** located in southern France in the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains near the prime meridian.

It had taken me almost a lifetime to discover that despite all my struggles and sacrifices to give my children the best home and education, I am not as valued as I should have been. Perhaps I am not as nice as I would like to think! This is a very tough lesson to learn. Events have stripped me of my right as a father to walk tall and give my only daughter away at her wedding. My eyes and that of my wife have been denied the pleasure of seeing our daughter being wed. There are no words that can adequately explain the insult I felt and continue to feel and the sadness I will carry to my grave. As they say this is life. What a shitty one it can be at times!

To be honest, deep inside me I feel my family was raped by an enemy within and there was very little I could do to put it right! At the time, I felt so humiliated that all I wanted was to disappear for good. In fact, one night I did hugged and kissed my two sons and my wife before getting in my car and drove away. My destination was unknown. Whilst at the wheel I watched my whole life being replayed through the window of my mind. I was full of self-pity. Nasty thoughts kept creeping in and out of my mind. The things that kept me on the road were the cat-eyes and the occasional flicker of lights from oncoming traffics. After a few hours driving in the darkness of the night, I decided to stop by a phone box and called a friend. He beseeched me to come and stay at his place. He was very understanding and sympathetic to my situation. I stayed for a fortnight at his place. I desperately needed to clear my head and review my situation. I reflected and reflected, and I finally decided to come back home and take care of my two sons and wife. They were now what were left of my family I valued so much.

When I got back home I knew that I somehow had to find the strength and courage to continue my struggle. My wife and I made a trip to Lourdes. On my return I found the strength I needed to re-established my grip and kept my pulse on the button.

It was time for my son Maurice to start his university education. Off he went to Brunel University to read for a degree in laws. Several years later my son returned from university and for the sake of my wife, I agreed to my daughter visiting us.

The pain has never left me and I don't think it ever will. It is like a cancer quietly working its way and killing me a little everyday. For the sake of everyone around me, I put up a brave face. What else can I do? What else is there to do? Despite everything though, I have always and will continue to cherish my daughter. I know she has done almost everything she could to please me. She is by nature quite thoughtful and very caring in her own way. For my 40th birthday she sent my wife and me to Paris for three nights, all expenses paid.

It is tragic that what has divided us cannot be undone. But I harbour a secret wish that one day someone will wave a magic wand and erase the scar in my heart and wipe away my sorrows! Until then, I just have to do as I was told:

"*…this is the way it is going to be dad whether you like it or not…*"

That was the statement made to me by my daughter. Oh! Boy this is one death sentence I could have done without!

The situation went on for years. Then one day in July 2006, my daughter surprised us all by declaring that she had filed for divorce and the court had granted her a decree nisi. I was dumb-founded. Although I had secretly wished that this would be just the outcome, deep inside, I had also wished otherwise. Unsure of what to say, I felt that the best policy was to hold my tongue. I left the room for a short while to have a talk to myself. I re-entered the room where my daughter was sitting and held my daughter in my arms, gave her a big hug and whispered in her ears that I would always be there for her and that I would do whatever I possibly could to help her rebuild her life. To help her on her way I paid for her to go on a

one week holiday to Portugal, accompanied by my wife and son, Maurice. The short break coupled with our unstinting support did enable her to come to terms with her situation. I am delighted that Patricia has since found someone new to romance with and we also see more and more of her.

On 30th January 2007, at Maidstone Hospital, Maternity ward, she gave birth to a beautiful baby girl named Mia. On 2nd February 2008 baby Grace came along, but sadly she died at birth. Finally on 9th June 2009 gorgeous Olivia came along—a spitting image of her mum. Amazingly, suddenly I had become a granddad. Life can be full of surprises! ✍

Quite talkative

Being a Gemini born on June 17th and coincidentally shares her birth date with her cousin Dessiga (now sadly deceased), Patricia would probably be accustomed to being called talkative. I wonder where she got it. She is usually quite excited when interacting with the world around her. Her mind can transform its private workings into useful group insight with ease which is an impressive ability to have.

She has no problem deviating from the norm and she realises it isn't negative but instead a source of freedom and joy. However this freedom, which she so actively use to pursue a wide range of seemingly unrelated topics is one of her greatest assets and could also, be her downfall.

Immediately she had obtained her Bachelor in Education degree with honours, she quickly rose to the post of Assistant head mistress in a primary school in Gillingham but appears to find it difficult to settle on this career path, which is a pity because it is a career that fits her quick mind and gifts for communication.

As a suggestion she could embrace her originality through a creative outlet of some sort. Whatever the field, it would be nice for her to find a focus that will keep her interested. Maybe she ought to look at the dedication of one of her birthday twins, such as Venus Williams or M.C. Escher, for inspiration instead of wasting her time admiring Tom Cruise.

Apart from one outrageous mistake she made in her life which had an unimaginable effect on the family, she is a loving and caring person and she will always have a warm place in my heart. ✍

"Even when the heart breaks in silence, love finds its way back—through whispered promises, unexpected arrivals, and the grace of holding on when letting go feels easier."

To my one and only daughter I dedicate these borrowed words:

Yesterday all my troubles Seem so far away,
Now they are here to stay.

Suddenly I am not
Half the man I used to be,
There is a shadow
Hanging over me.

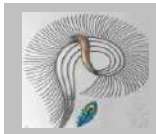
Why she had to go
I don't know,
She would not say,
Did I say
Something wrong?

Yesterday life was so beautiful each day'
Now I need a place to hide away.

The weakest link

I have and continue to live my life so that when my children think of fairness, caring, and integrity, they think of me and I have a dream that when my wife and I are gone, my three children will take care of each other. Of the three, David through no fault of his own has been the unluckiest. At a very early age we discovered that due to lack of oxygen at birth his ability to learn had been adversely affected. He continues to need special care and education. I had never thought that one of my children will be affected in this way. But despite his learning disability and all the difficulties associated with it, with our help, he lives what appears to be a contented life. He has a pleasant smile, a charming character that makes most people warm up to him and he asks for very little. But like other individuals in the same situation as him, he continues to experience a fair amount of prejudice particularly at work. There are still employers out there who have little or no knowledge of how to handle employees with learning disability which is unfortunate for my David. Other children too can be very cruel and some have indeed attempted to mock him. As long as I am around I will be his advocate and protector just as my wife would, but what about when we are both gone? This remains our biggest unsolved worry. I have put some money aside for him so that he will not be destitute. It will all depend on his sister and brother as to whether he struggles on his own or have them as his crutches to lean on whenever he needs to!✍

Too grown up!



To those who overlook or dismiss people with learning difficulties:

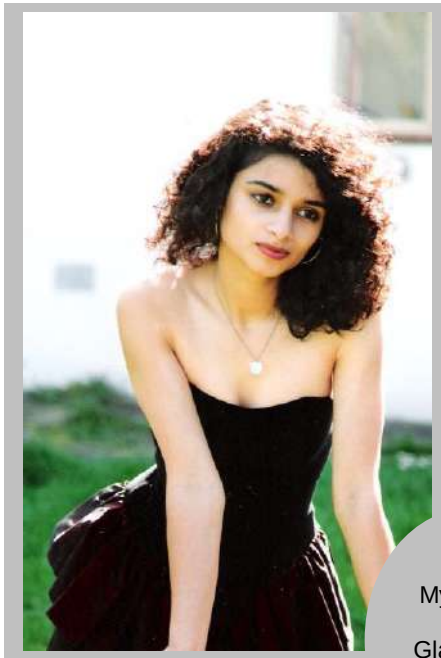
"Respect isn't earned by perfection—it's owed to every human being. People with learning difficulties face challenges most of us will never understand, yet they show resilience, creativity, and courage every single day. Dismissing them doesn't make you stronger—it reveals your own limitations. I've seen firsthand the beauty, intelligence, and depth that lives within those who learn differently. They are not broken. They are not less. They are simply navigating a world that wasn't built with them in mind—and doing so with grace. If you can't offer respect, at least offer silence. Because ignorance shouted loudly is still ignorance."

◀Olivia
(7 years old)

▼Mia
(9 years old) enjoying a holiday in Turkey.
April, 2016

Patricia Diana Chellen, B.Ed (Hons), NPQ—her name already speaks volumes. And if a picture tells a thousand words, this one whispers every chapter: dedication, brilliance, and the quiet strength of a woman who's earned her place.

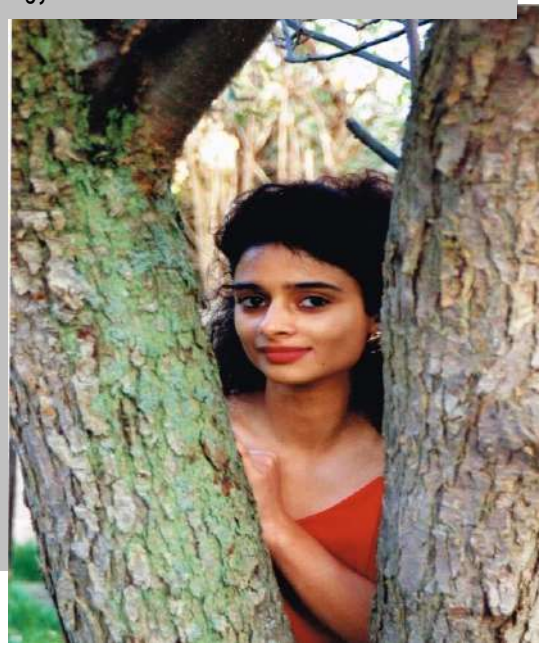
PATRICIA'S PICTURE GALLERY



My stylish and Glamorous Patricia

Patricia, my one and only daughter.

She has brain and beauty to match her flamboyant personality



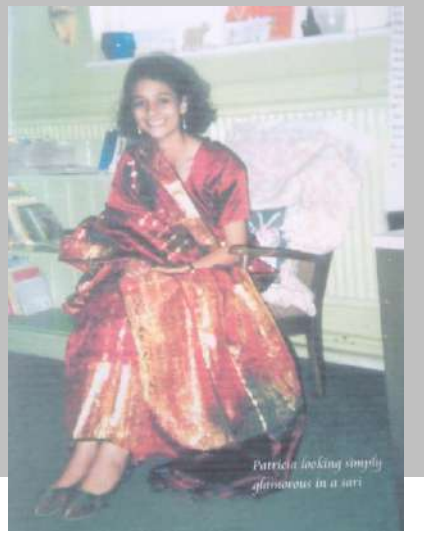
Patricia 19 years old

Patricia Diana Chellen—where brilliance meets allure, and grace wears confidence like silk. In this frame, she doesn't just turn heads—she rewrites the definition of power, poise, and unapologetic beauty.

Patricia Diana Chellen—where elegance meets fire. In this shot, she doesn't just pose—she commands the frame, a vision of confidence and desire wrapped in grace. The sexiest woman in the world, not because she tries, but because she simply is.

A virtual styling of Patricia

Dressed in streamlined coordinated Indian outfits showing off another side of her.



DAVID'S PICTURE GALLERY

A virtual styling of Patricia

Grace by the Glasshouse

David Andrew Chellen, born 2nd January 1973, stands poised beside the conservatory at Chamarel House, where light dances through glass and history lingers in the air. His presence is calm yet assured—a quiet dignity shaped by time, place, and memory. The setting, rich with botanical charm and architectural grace, frames him not just as a subject of the photo, but as part of the story it tells: of rootedness, reflection, and the enduring elegance of a life well lived.

HERE I
COME!

Joy in Motion

David stands in the open field, football held in one hand, his smile wide and unguarded—a snapshot of pure, unfiltered happiness. The grass bends gently beneath his feet, the sky stretches endlessly above, and for a moment, everything feels simple and right. His joy isn't just in the game—it's in the freedom of the space, the rhythm of movement, and the quiet triumph of being exactly where he wants to be. This image captures not just a boy with a ball, but a spirit in flight

IN THE PARK

David: "Mum this blonde girl I am sitting next to is making eyes at me."
Gina: "Is she?"
Tricia: "Dream on David."

David OFF TO LOURDES with Sister Mary and Father Martin

GANDHI ii

"Who? Me?"

PLAY TIME

◀ David riding his bike in the kitchen at 18, St. Georges Square, Maidstone.

SPLASH!
Aug., 1985 David enjoying a break splashing at Balluta resort, Malta

◀ *April. 1985. David at Rajen Vencatachellum's house in the dining room having a snooker contest with Rodney.*

This Rabbit Stew is really nice mum!

HOME ALONE
(with Princess Mimi)

Here they are—my gang of three. Unapologetically themselves, beautifully so. Say what you will, but to me, they're the finest kind: loyal, quirky, and utterly irreplaceable

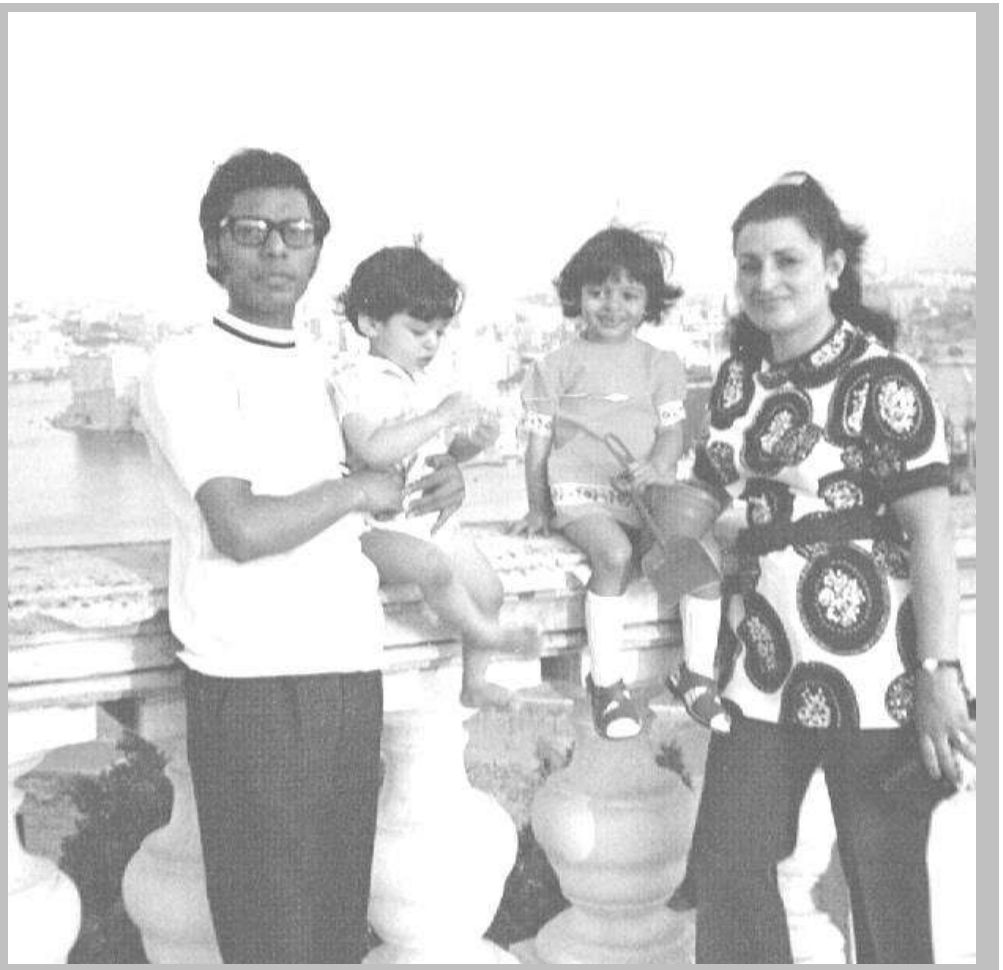
Here we are away from it all enjoying a break on the George Cross Island of Malta and we spent Christmas there.

Top picture, from Left to Right

My son Maurice, my wife Gina, my mother-in-law Assunta, my nephew Jean Paul (face hidden by Maurice), my niece Vanessa, my sis-ter-in-law Evelyn Magreen, and husband Paul, and my son David.

◀ From Left to Right Evelyn holding David on her lap. Patricia, and Gina. The photographer is Syd.

From left to right: David, Gina, and Patricia, posing by the Triton Fountain in Valletta—where water danced, stone shimmered, and the day held us in its sunlit embrace.



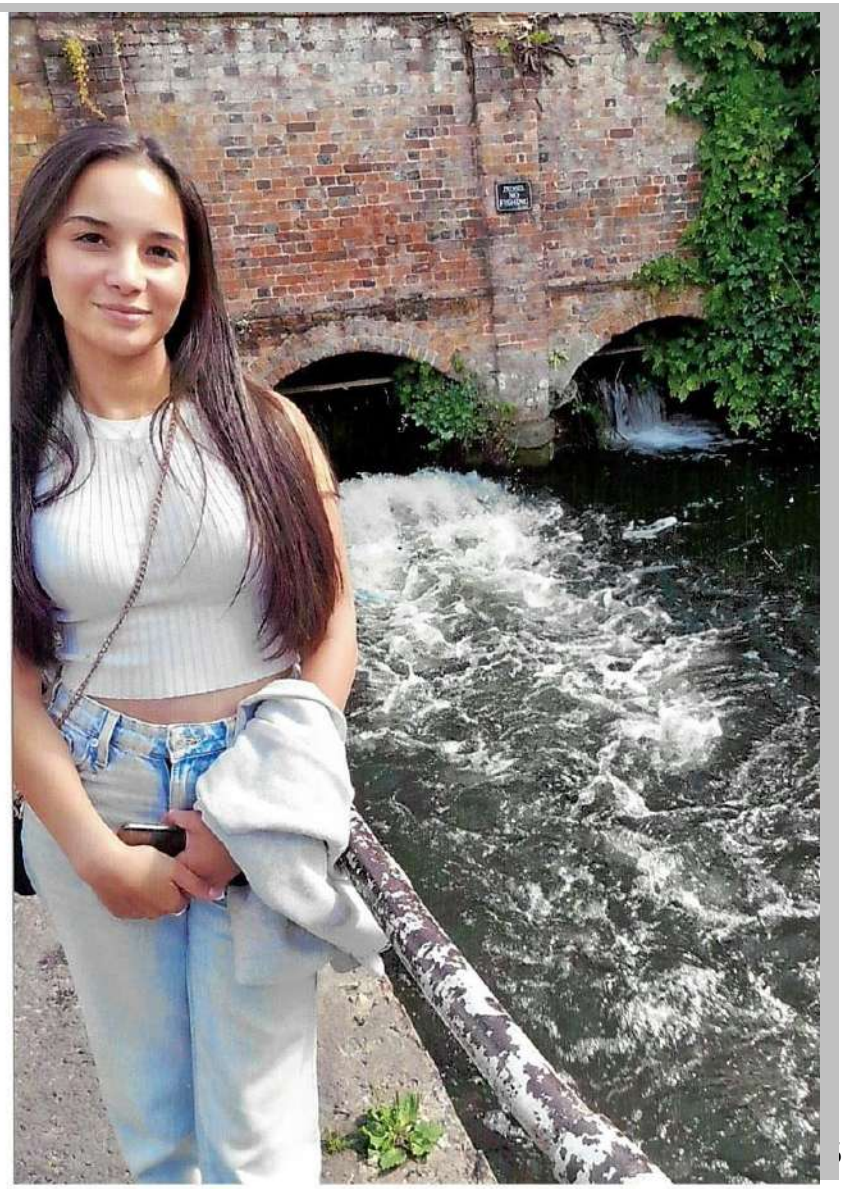
On the balcony at my in-laws' home in Qormi, Malta—where sunlight met stone and laughter lingered in the air.
From left to right: Syd, David, Pat, and me, Gina. A snapshot of warmth, family, and the view that held us.

TILL DEATH DO US PART

…And here is the woman who made it all happen for me. Gina and I have come a long way together, and we intend to continue, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in health or in sickness…

A virtual styling of Gina.
Doesn't she look gorgeous in a saree

Two rays of sun-shine,
striking a pose and stealing hearts—
my two grand-daughters, Olivia and Mia full of grace and giggles.



BED TIME

hi little brother!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Hey! I can walk

MENZEN

COMMUNION

Bless me and forgive me Lord for my sins so that I can do some more

STUDYTIME

COLLEGE
PREFECT
-1991-

The GRADUATE

Maurice Valentino Chellen, LLB, LLM
Bachelor of Laws – Brunel University
Masters in Laws – Kent of University

Just can't take him anywhere?

BORN
NAKED
Cover yourself man

Start Here

BATH TIME

MAURICE'S PICTURE GALLERY

◄ *Maurice Valentino Chellen, LLB, LLM.*
Born*: 8th November 1979*
Star Sign: *Scorpio*

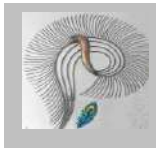
Being a Scorpio born on November 8th, his personality is defined by his shyness, and determined by his artistic nature. He sets goals for himself and works hard to accomplish them. However he prefers that his efforts remain private, as he detests being the centre of attention and this tendency only adds to his mystery and intrigue. He has an IQ just below 144 making him a gifted individual which is only matched by 2% of the British population. He enjoys and appreciates artistic expression, yet he maintains his shyness even in this area. I remember bringing him to Mauritius when he was a very young boy and it was during the month of December running to Christmas. My niece Devegi with her husband Rajendra had taken us window shopping in the town of Curepipe. There were many shoppers around. He entered a Chinese shop selling all sorts of musical instruments. As Maurice noticed a piano he went and stood in front of it and started to play a few notes. As he saw the shopkeeper who was standing behind the counter coming towards him, he stopped and started to move away from the piano, thinking that he was going to be told off.

'No, no,' said the china man, please sit down and continue to play.

As Maurice started to play, families with their children gathered around him. The China man was quick to spot the opportunity of a free advert for his merchandise.

Maurice is quite lovable, and his friends as well as we appreciate his loving personality, even though we are sometimes frustrated with the emotional distance he chooses to keep.

He can be quite stubborn when he chooses to`o, which is not necessary a bad thing as it is also the source of his determination, which is one of his greatest strengths but I wish he could avoid his moodiness. I believe his fear of being hurt keeps him closed off from those closest to him. This worries me because if he continues to hide parts of himself from those who love him, he will miss their support when he is experiencing tough times. ✍



"Maurice doesn't just belong to the two percent—he belongs to me. And in his mind's quiet brilliance, I see not just intellect, but a soul that listens deeply, learns fiercely, and loves with quiet precision."

The Granddaughters Mia and Olivia

There are two young women who shimmer like silk threads in the tapestry of my life—my granddaughters, Mia and Olivia. As they stand at the threshold of university, poised like peacocks ready to unfurl their first full plume, I see not only promise in their eyes, but wisdom waiting to be born.

They are the daughters of my daughter, and yet utterly their own—one with a laugh that cuts through shadow, the other with a gaze that sees deeper than most dare to look. I've watched them grow not just taller, but fuller: minds blooming, hearts stretching, spirits dancing ahead of the curve.

Their presence in this memoir is not incidental—it is essential. For in them lives the future of every story I've ever told.

They are the audience I never knew I was writing for, and the characters I never dared to invent.

I remember their childhoods not as chapters, but constellations—each moment a

star flickering with mischief, curiosity, or quiet tenderness. Olivia used to perch at the edge of my bed, thumbs tapping as she listened between texts. Mia would walk with me in the garden, her solemn grace stitched to music only she could hear.

Legacy in Bloom *for Mia and Olivia*

There are two young women, spun from silk,
threads gleaming through the tapestry I hold—
my granddaughters, poised in plume and promise,
on the cusp of flight where feathers unfold.
They stand as peacocks at the gate of knowing,
eyes lit with wisdom waiting to be sung;
not just daughters of my daughter—
but their own wild verses, already begun.
Olivia laughs like light through ancient sorrow,
Mia sees beyond what words reveal.
I've watched them stretch—beyond their stature,
into minds that bloom and hearts that feel.
They are the audience I never imagined,
the characters I feared to write alone.
Yet here they dance—essential, radiant,
in stories that have always called them home.
Their childhoods—constellations not chapters—
Mia in gardens, solemn and tuned to grace;
Olivia perched beside my bed,
catching meaning before she knew its face.
Now they speak with thunder's dignity,
and rain's gentle stir of future thought.
Olivia dreams of romance gilded,
Mia debates with elegance taut—
then turns to ask, with clear-eyed daring,
"Do you think that's fair?"
And I am caught.
I've planted my stories like hopeful seeds,
in soil they'll name and sow as their own.
Their wit, their kindness, echo beside me—
not behind, but with me, fully grown.
Weekends bloom with their arrival—
laughter clings like clove in air,
and rice carries stories in its steam,
as plates pass and hearts declare.
Christmas gleams beneath their giggles,
birthdays swell with candle chase.
They gift not things, but themselves entirely,
threads braided with timeless grace.
And oh—Mauritius, my heart's own map,
received not as tour, but as birthright known.
They walked its pulse, they spoke its rhythm,
claiming a homeland in barefoot tone.
I wondered—how they'd meet the island,
if they'd feel guest or something more.
They leaned in close, they asked with hunger,
and laughter bridged the tongue's worn shore.
We came home with sand and memory,
but also their whisper—"We'll go again."
Legacy stirred, not as goodbye,
but as return—reimagined, spoken then.
They plan the trip like architects of future,
their voices bright with longing's fire.
This isn't travel—it's inheritance dancing,
rooted, chosen, lifted higher.
Three generations, braided gently,
walking beaches where my own soul sings.
And they—my Mia, my Olivia—
are how my story earns its wings.✍

Now they stand taller than memory, with opinions that stir the air like wind before rain. Our conversations once danced around their futures—now they shape

them with confidence, offering recommendations, convictions, and dreams. Olivia imagines romance with a rich millionaire, hoping never to work. Mia prefers debate: slicing through ideas with elegant logic, then pausing to ask, "Do you think that's fair?"

And then there is Mauritius—my homeland, my heart's geography. I took them not as tourists, but as kin, eager for them to meet their cousins, to wade into stories whispered in Creole, French, and English. I watched them fall into rhythm: British accents softened by curiosity, questions shaped by wonder. For me, it was a return. For them, a discovery.

This is how legacy lives—not as something handed down, but as something embraced and reimagined.✍

***Mia (Aquarius)**:*

Born on January 30th, 2007, Mia moves through life with an unmistakable spark—independent, inventive, and quietly defiant. Her mind dances ahead of the present, always reaching for possibility, for justice, for something more luminous and fair. Like a true Aquarius, she holds freedom close and equality even closer, not just as ideals, but as promises she's determined to keep. She is the kind of soul who questions gently, yet refuses to be bound—progressive in spirit, and tender in her rebellion.

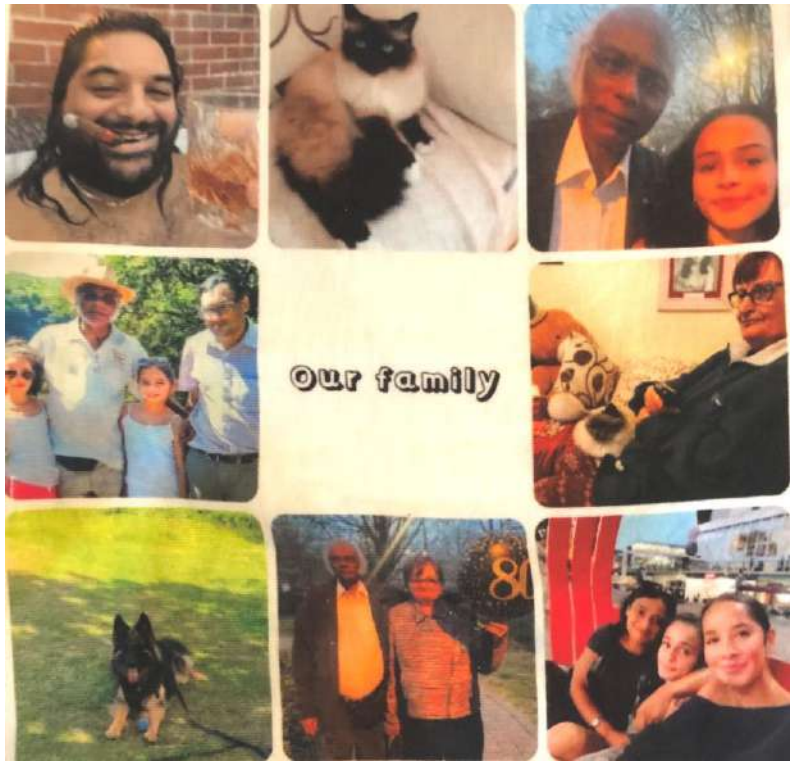
Olivia (Gemini)

Born on June 9th, 2009, Olivia is a young woman of strategic insight and quiet discipline, whose generosity radiates like summer light. A natural presence, she often exudes a positivity that draws others in with ease. Her honesty—refreshing and unfiltered—can sometimes land with unexpected sharpness, a trait that grows gentler with time and wisdom.

Guided by the strength of her life path number 8 and the steadfast spirit of the Ox in the Chinese zodiac, Olivia carries within her the makings of a leader: resilient, intuitive, and bold in heart.

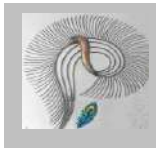
Our family:

They say you can kiss your family goodbye, pack your bags, and scatter across miles—but those miles don't sever the invisible threads. As Buechner reminds us, you do not merely live in a world; a world lives in you. I carry mine in my ribcage and in the rhythm of my walk: my wife's steadfast grace, my granddaughters' laughter like birdsong on warm stone, and the ache of absence feathered with memory. Even as I step forward—pen in hand, heart open—the world I come from fans out behind me, peacock-like. Not just for show. For survival. For beauty. For truth.



Eighty Years, One Balloon, Countless Blessings

In the soft glow of celebration, my wife stands at the heart of it all—graceful, smiling, and holding a single balloon that seems to float with the weight of memory and joy. Around us, the generations gather: children whose laughter once filled our home, grandchildren whose wonder renews it, and pets curled contentedly at our feet, as if sensing the sacredness of the moment. This photo is more than a snapshot; it's a living tapestry of love, endurance, and the quiet triumph of family. At eighty, I see not just the years behind me, but the legacy unfolding in every face turned toward mine.



"Family is not just where I come from—it's the echo in my laughter, the hush in my grief, and the thread that binds every chapter I've dared to write."

Chapter Eight

My children and grandchildren are the heart of my world. I gave them all I could—my time, my love, my strength—and cherished every moment we shared. Whether in laughter or quiet presence, I poured myself into the gift of being with them, knowing that these bonds are the true measure of a life well lived.

The father and…

CHAPTER 8- THE FATHERHOOD

Before I got married, I had three theories about bringing up children, now I have three children and no theories.

There is no rulebook.

Finding out you are going to be a dad is a life-changing moment. Whilst there was excitement, I could not help feeling daunted. I figured there would be ups and downs, but I was confident we would work through it. We decided to take it in our stride because it was the right thing to do. As each baby was half of me, I wanted to be involved—not just present, but truly engaged. So we reconfigured our lives to welcome the new arrivals, reshaping routines, expectations, and even our sense of self.

When the first child was going to be born, I had barely got to grips with being a husband, and suddenly I found myself a dad-in-waiting. I wasn't unhappy with the prospect, but stepping into that role felt like walking into a fog—exciting, yes, but uncertain. I had very little idea what it entailed. Having lost my own father when I was only four years old, I had no role model to fall back on. There was no blueprint, no manual, no inherited wisdom passed down. I searched for a job description that could define fatherhood, but none existed. So I made it up as I went along, guided by instinct, love, and the quiet ache of absence.

One thing I was determined to do was to give my child what I would have wanted from my dad—plus that little bit more. I wanted to be the voice that soothed, the arms that held, the presence that never wavered. Once my daughter was born, the learning curve was steep. My role shifted overnight. I moved from being in an interchangeable partnership to a position where I needed to support my wife so she could care for our baby. I took a keen interest in her. I was proud—so proud—to have been blessed with such a pretty girl. I rocked her, pushed her in her pram, sang her lullabies (terrible ones, admittedly) that I'd learned years ago while babysitting my nephews and nieces back in Mauritius.

But beneath the joy, there was a quiet loneliness. Everyone close to me was far away. I missed the strong family network I could have leaned on for advice, for reassurance, for those late-night conversations that help you feel less alone in the chaos of new parenthood.

Two years later, morning sickness returned. I knew what that meant. A second

Swinging in the Park with my daughter Patricia, 1972 — just us, the breeze, and a memory that still sways in my heart, where laughter flew higher than the trees and love began its lifelong arc..

child was born, then a third. Three children—our perfect trio. Our family was complete.

My wife and I worked hard to raise them. We had a clearly understood division of labour, and for a long while, we stuck to it almost rigidly. I participated as much as I could, not just out of duty but out of love. I wanted to help shape their future, to be a steady hand and a soft heart. Today, I am delighted to have three grown-up children who have done us proud. As a dad, all I ever wanted was for them to adore me as I have—and always will—adore them.

On reflection, I know I could have done better. With guidance, perhaps I could have been more patient, more present, more prepared. But hindsight is a generous teacher. Have I been as wonderful a dad as I would like to think? That's for my children to judge. I only hope they carry forward the best of what I gave them—and improve upon the rest. As for me, I had my chance. And I gave it my best shot.

Being a grandfather

I did not know either of my grandfathers—they both died before I was born. I was fortunate to know my two maternal grandmothers, but I never experienced that special bond with them. My father, too, never knew his grandchildren. He died before they were born. So I never saw firsthand how deep and joyful that relationship could be.

Victor Hugo once said, "There are fathers who do not love their children; there is no grandfather who does not adore his grandson." I wonder what he would have said about grandmothers—especially mine.

If being a father was a new experience, being a grandfather—or "grandpa," as my grandchildren call me—has been an even greater one. "There is no better gig than being a grandfather," a friend once told me when my daughter and son-in-law were expecting their first baby. His words have proven true time and time again.

I've taken time to reflect on how I can be a "super grandpa" to my two beloved grandchildren. Someone once gave me seven tips: Time, Respect, Preparation in the home, Spoil them, Have fun, Give gifts, and Avoid risks. I've tried to live by those.

Time is irreplaceable. I spend as much of it as I can with my grandkids. They visit *almost* every weekend. We chat on WhatsApp. I try not to be intrusive—I know how important it is to respect boundaries. They've tested my patience, yes, but I never let that stop me from engaging with them. Their presence is a gift.

I've learned that meddling can be the bane of a young parent's existence. So I offer advice, not direction. I honour my daughter and son-in-law's wishes, even when I see things going awry. I remind myself: it's their journey. They will reap what they sow.

My grandchildren are remarkably well-behaved. When told not to touch something, they usually obey. My wife and I rarely need to hide delicate items. She's even made a few adjustments in the home for their comfort. Maybe we've been lucky. Long may it continue.

I spoil them, of course—mostly with money, so they can choose what they want. When I slip up, my daughter is quick to correct me, and rightly so. I respect her parenting.

They love showing off—singing songs, performing ballet moves. It's pure joy. I dream of taking them to Disneyland. For now, a walk in the park, feeding ducks or a day at the shopping centre will do.

Growing up, I had few gifts. My children had more. My grandchildren are spoiled with gifts of all kinds. I let my wife and daughter guide me on what's appropriate and safe.

Their parents are protective—sometimes overly so. I believe in measured risk-taking, but I leave that to them. If something goes wrong under my watch, I'd be in a precarious position.

The beauty of grandfathering is choice. As a father, I had no choice—she was mine, and I had to be involved. As a grandfather, I am not necessary, but I hope I am important. I have their pictures framed at home and saved on my Iphone. I show them off to anyone who'll look. I feel proud—of myself, of my daughter, of the family we've built.

Grandfathering is fun, rewarding, and humbling. Am I doing as well as I think I am? I hope so.

Mia and Olivia —
my granddaughters, pictured together in a moment of grace and giggles, two stars in the same sky, threads in my tapestry of love. They shine with wonder, laughter, and the quiet magic of generations still unfolding.

▲*Mia and Olivia*▼
enjoying a cocktail in Turkey

From Left to Right

Family Pride – Tricia's Milestone Moment

Gina, Mia, Olivia, David, and newly qualified Officer Tricia—gathered in one radiant frame, where love stands shoulder to shoulder with ambition. In her crisp uniform, Tricia shines with purpose, her eyes set on justice and the path to becoming a detective. A portrait of devotion, legacy, and the courage to dream beyond the badge.

The other side

From L to R Back row

Gary
Oliver
Lyra
Nigel
Tim
Patricia

Front row

Olivia,
Kathy
Mia,
Megan

From Left to Right:

Mia, Tim, Patricia, Olivia

Wingbeats of Wonder: *Watching Mia and Olivia Take Flight*

"Mia (Left) and Olivia (Right)—once twirling through my garden, now poised to soar. Two radiant souls, grown with grace, ready to write their own sky-bound stories. From small feet to bold steps, they carry the music of memory and the courage to bloom."

Mia with Sister Olivia posing again!

Olivia and Mia displaying one of their talents they picked up following their visits to Egypt

Desert Rhythms at Home – April 2017

Fresh from their Egyptian adventure, Olivia and Mia twirled into the lounge in flowing outfits and radiant smiles—bringing the spirit of Cairo to Kent. With playful grace and infectious laughter, they showed Uncle David how to belly dance, turning memory into movement and heritage into joy. A moment where culture met kinship and the living room became a stage for delight.

From left to right: Olivia, David, Mia

"Granddad and Grandma, look what we brought back from Egypt—a camel with stories in its stride, hoof beats echoing across generations, straight from the pyramids to your porch."

"On April 12, 1918, Mia, Olivia, and their cousin Krish were photographed at Rivière des Anguilles, Mauritius, gently holding a wild creature amidst the lush landscape."

"Dressed in red and wrapped in joy, Father Christmas found his truest gifts in two radiant hugs—Mia and Olivia, the heartbeats of my holiday and the sparkle in every season."

***A Christmas Embrace** – Gina and the Children, 1980s*
In the soft glow of holiday lights, my young and beautiful wife Gina sits surrounded by our three radiant children—Patricia, David, and Maurice—each one a gift-wrapped in laughter and love. The lounge hums with warmth, the tree twinkles with promise, and time pauses to honour this tender tableau of family, joy, and beginnings.

From Left to Right –
Mia and Olivia with Frozen Magic
Mia and Olivia, side by side, wrapped in the sparkle of childhood and the enchantment of Frozen. With wide smiles and twinkling eyes, they channel Elsa and Anna's spirit—sisters in joy, adventure, and imagination. A moment where winter's magic met warm hearts, captured forever in a single frame.

Syd and Olivia.

Olivia in Motion – Chamarel House Garden

My second granddaughter, Olivia, nestled in her pushchair like a spring blossom, as I guided her through the winding paths of our garden at Chamarel House. Each turn felt like a quiet blessing—sunlight dancing on her cheeks, legacy blooming beneath our feet. A moment of grace, where generations met in the gentle rhythm of a stroll.

Two Frames, One Family – 1986 & 2003

In 1986, we gathered in the lounge—young faces, warm smiles, and the quiet joy of togetherness captured in a single frame. Seventeen years later, beneath the open sky at Chamarel House, we posed again—older, wiser, still woven by love. From carpet to garden, from laughter to legacy, these portraits echo the passage of time and the constancy of heart.

Patricia in Qormi, Malta – Summer's Grace, 1980

With sunshade tilted and spirit aglow, Patricia sits poised on her daddy's knee on the balcony of her grandparents' home—where lime-stone walls cradle generations and the Maltese breeze carries laughter. A portrait of youth and sunshine, framed by legacy.

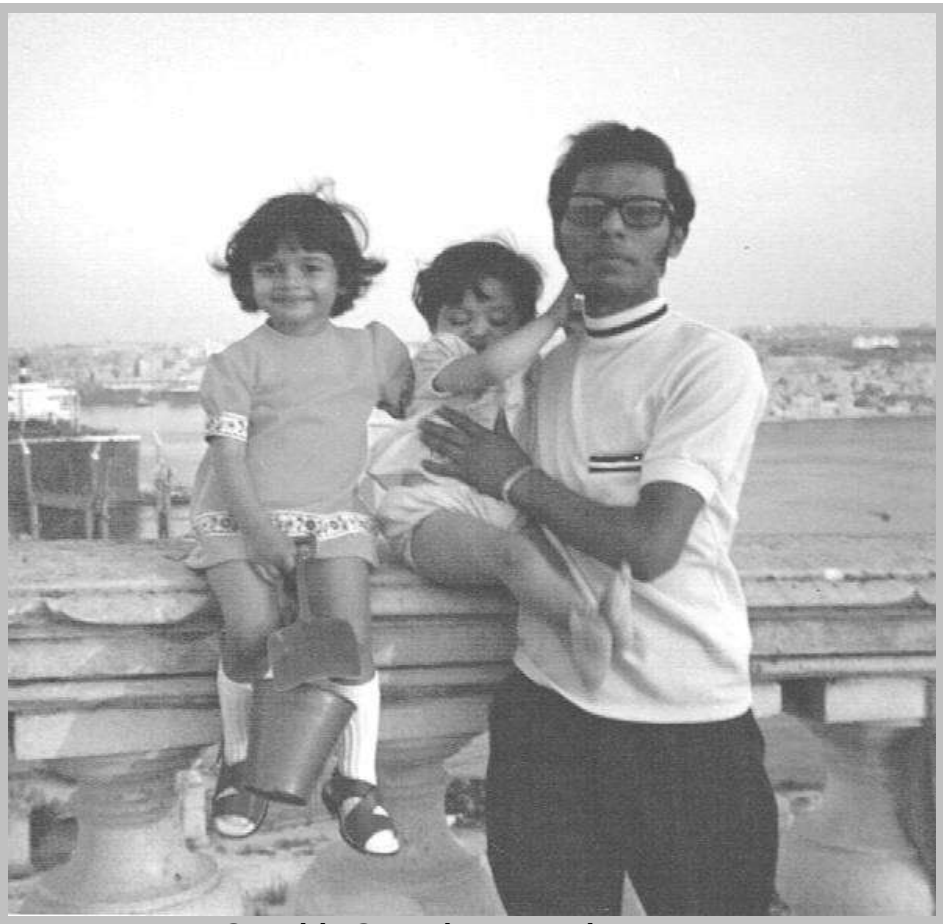
@ 18 St. Georges Square, Maidstone, Kent. -1980

In the warm glow of our first home, laughter echoed through the lounge as Patricia, David, and Maurice unwrapped wonder and wove memories into the fabric of our family. A mo-ment of beginnings—where love settled in like snow on the sill, quiet and lasting.

From Left to right:

Pier Reflections – Hastings, Kent

Syd, Patricia, Gina, and David—gathered on the sun-warmed pier, the sea stretching wide beneath a cloudless sky. A hot summer day wrapped in laughter and quiet rest, where time slowed and the breeze carried the comfort of togetherness. A snapshot of family, sun, and serenity by the shore.



Seaside Serenity – Hastings, Kent

A sun-drenched day with Patricia and David, resting on the pier as the sea shimmered and the breeze played gently through our hair. Hastings offered its warmth, its waves, and a moment of stillness—where laughter lingered, and the horizon felt close enough to touch.

A Gown, A Promise – Maurice and Me

Clad in my university gown, I stand beside Maurice—my arm around his small shoulders, my heart full of hope. In that quiet pose, I offered more than a smile to the camera; I offered a vision. That if he studied hard, dreamed boldly, and walked his own path with purpose, one day he too would wear this gown—not just as fabric, but as a symbol of possibility passed from parent to child.

And so he did. Maurice went on to earn his LLB and LLM, fulfilling the promise in that moment and stitching his own thread into our family's legacy of learning and aspiration.

1983 – Maurice at the Table, Ditton, Kent

Teaching Maurice, the art of table manners was the plan—but the sparkle in his eyes said otherwise. At two years old, he was far more enchanted by the camera's gaze than the cutlery in his hands. A moment of mischief and charm, where learning paused and posing prevailed.

David and Me – Folkestone Beach, England

Barefoot in the breeze, with the sea whispering its timeless lullaby, David stood by my side—father and son, tide and time. The shore cradled our laughter; the horizon held our dreams. A moment etched in salt and sunlight, where love touched the waves... and stayed.

Maurice Valentino's 2nd Birthday – November 8th

At No.2 Bradbourne Lane, beneath the soft hum of celebration, little Maurice grips the knife with wide-eyed wonder—his tiny hands guided by mine as we slice into sweetness and time. A mother's touch, a son's delight, and a moment that still tastes of love.

And so, from the quiet pride of grandfathering, I turn to the music of memory—the verses that bloom where love takes root. For when words are not enough, poetry steps in to cradle the joy my grandchildren bring.✍

Mia, Mia

(Ode from your grand parents: Nanny Gina and Granddad Syd)

Mia, Mia, you are so sweet
You make every day a special treat
You have a smile that brightens the room
You have a heart that is always in bloom

Mia, Mia, you are so smart
You have a curious and creative spark
You love to learn and explore new things
You have a mind that is ready for anything

Mia, Mia, you are so kind and bold
You have a gentle and generous soul
You care for others so we are told
You have a spirit that is pure gold

Mia, Mia, you are so loved by us
You are a blessing and a joy to us
You have a family that adores you
You have a place in our hearts that is true.

Mia
18 years old

Pearl of My Heart

Happy birthday to Mia, my lovely grand daughter.
You fill my life with joy, fun and laughter.
You are a precious gift, a beautiful treasure.
You are the best thing that ever happened, for sure.

You have grown so much, from a baby to a girl.
You are smart and kind, a rare and wonderful pearl.
You have so much to offer, so much to explore.
You are amazing and talented, we couldn't ask for more.

I love you with all my heart; you are my pride and delight.
You are my sweet angel, my guiding light.
You are my everything, my reason to live.
You are my grand daughter, the best gift God could give.

Olivia, Under Twin Suns

Born when June's breath was bright and new,
a Gemini with twin minds and steady hue—
one hand charts the stars in silent thought,
the other offers warmth the world forgot.

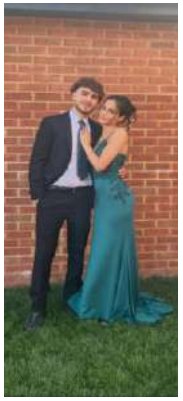
She walks with summer folded in her gaze,
each step a whisper, each smile ablaze.
Truth tumbles from her lips, unshaped and clear,
a blade that softens year by year.

Her heart is ruled by number eight—
unyielding, calm, and carved by fate.
The Ox stands firm within her soul,
a beast of burden, yet quietly whole.

She does not shout to lead the way,
but moves as tides might shape the bay—
resilient, bold, her spirit tuned
to rhythms that the wise attune.

So let her rise, this child of air,
with insight rare and vision fair.
For in her quiet, fearless grace,
the world may find its gentler place.

Olivia
16 years old



Reflection

As I look back on the winding path from fatherhood to grandfathering, I see not a straight line, but a tapestry—stitched with lullabies, laughter, and lessons learned in real time. I did not have a manual, nor a model to follow. But I had love. And love, when given freely and imperfectly, becomes its own kind of wisdom.

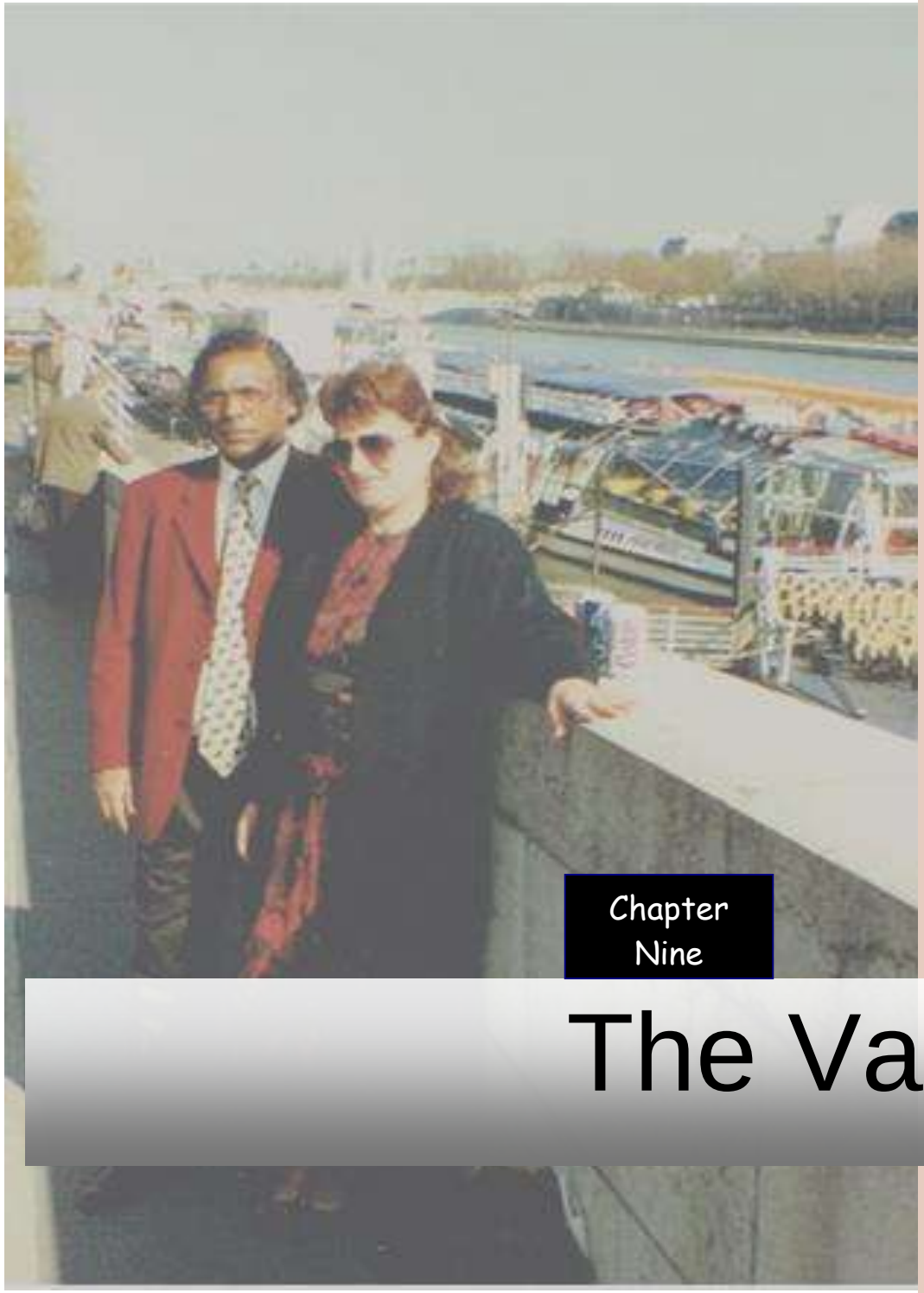
My children were my first great teachers in the art of devotion. My grandchildren, now, are my reward—not for perfection, but for presence. They remind me that joy is found not in grand gestures, but in small, sacred moments: a walk in the park, a ballet twirl, a WhatApps call that ends in giggles.

To my wife—my anchor, my muse, my co-architect in this life of meaning—this chapter is dedicated to you. You held the rhythm when I lost the beat. You shaped our home into a sanctuary. You are the quiet brilliance behind every triumph, the grace that steadied every storm.

And to our children and grandchildren: may you always know how deeply you are loved. May you carry forward the best of what we gave you, and forgive the rest. May your own stories bloom with courage, kindness, and the music of memory!

This is my legacy—not perfect, but true. Not finished, but full. And if I have done anything right, it is this: I showed up. I loved. I stayed.✍

"I did not follow a map—I followed love. And in every imperfect step, I found the rhythm of devotion, the grace of presence, and the quiet triumph of showing up."



Chapter Nine

The Vacations…

Paris, 1985

All work and no play makes for a joyless life. Yet somehow, now and then, we managed to escape the routine—sometimes as a family, sometimes just the two of us. In those moments, the world felt lighter, and joy found its way back in.

CHAPTER NINE – THE VACATIONS

"Sometimes I sit and think, sometimes I just sit."

Language of Love

Love, as we've come to know it, isn't always loud. It doesn't always arrive with fanfare or flourish. Sometimes, it's a cup of tea placed gently on my desk. Sometimes, it's a sigh understood without explanation. Sometimes, it's simply staying—when leaving might have been easier.

Our vows didn't end at the altar. They grew with us. They adapted. They whispered through the years in ways we never expected. "For better or worse" became a living promise, not just a ceremonial phrase. It showed up in the way Gina folded my shirts, in the way I did things for her, in the way we forgave each other for things we didn't even know needed forgiving.

We developed our own language—not just of words, but of glances, silences, and shared looks across crowded rooms. Gina could say more with a raised eyebrow than most could with a paragraph. I learned to read her moods like weather patterns—knowing when to offer comfort, when to give space, and when to simply hold her hand.

There were love letters sent. Birthday cards that became keepsakes. Anniversary dinners that didn't need candlelight to feel sacred. We didn't need grand gestures—we had each other. And that was enough.

Even in disagreement, love found its way. We learned to argue with respect, to listen with intention, and to return to each other with humility. Pride sometimes threatened to pull us apart, but love—quiet, steady love—held us together.

Gina's way of loving was layered. She loved through action, through art, through memory. Her words carried weight—not just because they were beautiful, but because they were true.

And I loved her back—not just with flowers or gifts, but with presence. With attention. With the kind of loyalty that doesn't waver when things get hard. We built a life where love wasn't just felt—it was practiced. Daily. Deliberately.

Now, as we look back on decades of shared life, I see our love not as a single story, but as a language we invented together. One that only we speak. One that continues to evolve. One that, I hope, will echo long after we're gone.

They Bragged

It's often said that one of the best ways to cope with life's stresses is to take a break—to recharge your batteries. A good vacation can soothe the soul, boost health, and rekindle joy. But not everyone can afford one.

It doesn't have to be grand. A bed and breakfast in the countryside. A few days exploring museums and dining in the city. But as my wife and I painfully discovered, by the time my pay packet covered the bills, there was nothing left for holidays. For ten long years, our family made do with quiet afternoons in the back garden, while friends and colleagues jetted off abroad and returned with stories—and sometimes, a touch of smugness.

We didn't mind missing out on luxury. What mattered most was meeting our basic needs without falling into debt. That was our priority. And in our own way, we found peace in simplicity.

Revisiting My Homeland

For years, I'd longed to return to Mauritius—to see my mother and two brothers I'd left behind. Later, I learned from my brother Kisna that my mother had longed for me too. "Since you left," he said, "she watched other mothers being visited by their sons from abroad and wondered about you."

I'd often wondered about my nephews and nieces, especially those born since I'd left. Would they recognize me? Would they welcome me? My mind boggled.

And then I realized I wasn't alone. Gina, too, missed her homeland—Qormi, Malta. Though she rarely spoke of it, I could sense her quiet ache whenever the subject came up. I'm sure she saw the same sadness in me—the longing to hug my mum, to share a drink and a chat with my brothers who had done so much for me.

But we both knew we couldn't afford the journey. So we bore our pain in silence—until December 1977, when I finally managed to save enough to take my family to Mauritius for the first time in ten years.

I expected a joyful reunion. And in many ways, it was. But in others, it was unexpectedly divisive.

As we landed at Plaisance Airport (now Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport), there they were—my two wonderful brothers with their families, and my dear mother waiting just outside the terminal. She hadn't seen me in a decade. Like the other waiting mothers, she stood at the railing, eyes scanning the crowd. I was later told she didn't recognize me at first. It was Kisna who pointed me out as I dragged my suitcases through the exit.

It was nearly 10 p.m. We hugged. We cried. Tears of joy flowed freely. I kept embracing my mother, studying her face for signs of change. She caressed mine, perhaps wondering if the man before her was truly her son.

But joy was short-lived. In the airport car park, discord sparked. My brother Marday insisted we go to his house first—it was proper, he said. Kisna disagreed, arguing that since our mother lived with him, we should go there first. Neither would yield. The decision fell to me.

What had begun as a joyful reunion was suddenly marred. I knew that whichever choice I made, I'd disappoint one of them. In that moment, I wanted nothing more than to turn around and board the next flight back to England.

Time to compromise

Here I was my first visit to Mauritius after ten years and I could not believe that my arrival was already causing frictions, bringing all the bad memories I thought were dead and buried. In an attempt to keep both brothers happy, I got them to compromise. I asked my wife and son David to go with Marday to his house, whilst my daughter Patricia and I got into the car to be driven to my mum's house.

It was later that night when my family and I were once again reunited at my mother's place. They of course could not understand the fuss and I was left to explain.

Most tourists, who have visited Mauritius, describe the island as the Star of the Indian Ocean. Unfortunately, my wife did not see that side because she was mixing with 'real' people and having a real bird's eye view into the lives of the Mauritians. That was quite a rich education for her. Despite the unexpected and unpleasant incident at the airport, she was impressed with the way my relations treated her. Afterwards, she would often describe her experience as "I can't complain, because wherever I went I was treated like a queen." At least that was good. She may not have liked being served "gateaux piment" (chilli cake), by the lady in the street-corner, wrapped in a piece of old newspaper, but she did make a point of learning how to cook it for me.

She found walking on fire, standing on swords and knives, men and women dancing with protruding tongues held by needles driven through the sides of the cheeks and walking on callipers bedded with nails amazing and almost unbelievable.

However, she has since watched documentaries about this practice on British TV which have broadened her education. She resisted my eldest brother's attempt to make her dress in a sari or to eat on a banana leaf although she has since eaten on a banana leaf in France at Mimi Vencatachellum's place and worn a sari at Priscilla's wedding where she was the maid of honour.

For years I had also read and heard Mauritius being described as 'the paradise island'. I could never understand how people arrived at that conclusion until my second visit to Mauritius when my nephew Dessiga had invited us to spend an evening at a five-star tourist hotel he was managing at the time.

The hotel was nicely situated at a famous seaside resort. For those brief but fascinating moments, I experienced life in Mauritius as a tourist and everything that has been said or written began to make sense.

As a Mauritian boy growing up on that island, I felt surrounded by sugar cane fields, bushes and trees. The majority of times my meal consisted of boiled rice, vegetable broth and coconut chutney, with the occasional pieces of meat or fish.

By and large, I would take a dip or two in the nearby rivers dotted around the village where I used to live. Most of the places one can see advertised in tourist brochures were alien to me. If I did go to the seaside then it would be somewhere like Pointe-Aux-Sables.

That night, whilst at that hotel, I had a glimpse at the lavish display of seafood, a wide range of leisure activities and amenities and the electrifying nightlife that the tourists were enjoying, and my entire concept of Mauritius changed instantly.

For twenty-one years, I lived cradled by an island of wonder—yet wonder never cradled me. The multicoloured earths of Chamarel, the filao-fringed shores of Île aux Cerfs, the birdsong gardens of Casela—all whispered their splendour beyond my reach. Born into modest means, my eyes were taught to dream, not to roam. And so, the island bloomed around me like a secret I was never meant to hear. ✍

Le Morne resort

On December 4, 2003, Boeing 777, flight BA2063 travelling at 407 mph at an altitude of 11312 feet arrived at Plaisance airport, Mauritius, with my wife, my son David and me on board. After eleven hours and ten minutes in the clouds we were exhausted. My two brothers met us at the airport and took us to 'Flic-En-Flacq' where our son Maurice was waiting for us in a bungalow. (Yes he was already in Mauritius, three days before us).

The weather was quite hot, so we treated ourselves to a nice glass of cold Phoenix beer (a Mauritian beer brewed with a selection of the finest ingredients since 1963). I was so delighted to be sitting in the midst of my two brothers enjoying a drink together. We have never before done such a thing together. It was a very precious moment in my life watching my two brothers smiling and exchanging friendly words. My mother would have been over the moon seeing us three brothers enjoying each other's company. On that occasion, my family and I stayed for one month in Mauritius.

During this visit, we spent a day at Le Morne resort hotel, in the company of Steve Smallsman and his friends. That was the first time in my life I'd set foot in that hotel. As I walked on the hotel grounds and the secluded beach, I felt stared at

by the foreign tourists lazing on their sunbeds or swimming in the sea. The most probable reason was that I was the only Mauritian tourist to be seen there. I was delighted with the opportunity to taste the facilities in that beautiful seaside resort hotel, but I will always wonder why I had to return to my homeland as a tourist to enjoy this side of life in Mauritius!

During this visit, at the time I thought was probably going to be my last trip to Mauritius, I wanted to meet everybody, go everywhere and see everything I had not seen for a long time. I had this desperate need to feast my eyes once more on the place where I was born and where I went to school in my young days. I generally wanted to see to what extent (if at all) Mauritius has changed since I'd left it over three decades ago. Almost everywhere I went I could only see traces of the past. Most people were reasonably well off and most of them have become selfishly embroiled in their affairs. Even with my relations, I felt a bit of a stranger in my own country.

This trip to Mauritius was meant to be quite different to any other trips I had previously made. In many ways it was. Instead of staying with my brother Kisna, as we had previously done we stayed in a bungalow by the seaside at Flic-En-Flacq. We had a hired car at our disposal. We were able to come and go as we pleased. My family appreciated the freedom of being able to maintain our space. We were able to behave like tourists enjoying a holiday in Mauritius, whilst at the same time sharing a moment or two with relatives and old friends.

Both Maurice and David enjoyed their takeaways of Mauritian cuisine. Maurice was particularly pleased to be able to brag that he dived and swam in the deep blue water of the Indian Ocean. Gina also enjoyed spending time sunbathing on the sandy beach but hated the mosquito bites and the occasional tummy upsets.

For me, the visit allowed me to meet Robert and Steve - two great guys. Since 1967, when I left Mauritius, several nieces and nephews have been born. Meeting them was a great treat. Although we did succeed in organising a Chellen-family get-together, it was really unfortunate that we could not organise a one-day outing, where we could all have had fun together. What a memorable occasion this would have been for three brothers, their wives, children, and grandchildren, son/daughter-in-laws mixing and sharing each other's company! The opportunity was there but sadly not taken up…

Beau Bois

Beau-Bois, located on the Northeast side of Mauritius—five miles away from its capital city Port Louis, is a small village where I was born. I went there with my two brothers.

Here I was, standing on a rocky path, after forty-seven years living in Kent. All I could see was a vast piece of land where once lay a thatch cottage.

Alas, the cottage I had come to see was nowhere to be seen. For some stupid reason, I had expected the cottage to be still standing there. I felt a touch of

My two brothers, Kisna and Marday, sitting beside my beloved wife Gina beneath the sprawling canopy of an ancient tree in Beau Bois, Mauritius—my birthplace, where roots run deep and memories bloom.

nostalgia engulfing me as I feasted my eyes on the empty spot where the cottage once stood and I could not stop wondering what had happened to it.

The streams and rivers which used to surround the cottage and in which I had many times swum half-naked, the plain fields in which I had played, and the fruits in the orchards that I had robbed, were abandoned. The area had dramatically changed. The beautiful streams had run dry, the water in the rivers was no more, and the paths leading to them were covered with long grass, as if nature itself felt ashamed and deliberately obstructed the passage preventing anyone, trying to walk through. The beautiful green meadows where the cows used to graze were no more.

The echoes of the nearby mountain incessantly repeated the hollow murmurs of the winds that shook the neighbouring forests, but near the spot where the cottage once stood, all was calm and still.

Nearly a century ago, although it felt more like a hundred and fifty years ago, a small family of five lived in that cottage but none of the locals remembered them. It was as if they never existed. Is that surprising? Of course, it was not. As we all know: out of sight is out of mind.

Turning my head to my right, a few distance away from where I stood, I

Here we are, on my right my brother Marday and on my left My brother Kisna, standing on a footpath recapturing the past. I have not seen this area for 35 years. Alas! The place where we once lived has changed almost beyond recognition. The house we lived in has disappeared; the canal and stream were dried. Nature may have washed away the evidence, but our memories will prevail forever.

December 16, 2003.

Where Our Roots Still Whisper

The bushes and trees behind us may quietly veil the stories of our beginnings, but for those who knew us—three brothers bound by childhood and spirit—this place speaks volumes. It was here that life first unfolded for us, shaping who we would become. Though time has carried each of us down different paths, crafting our own histories in distant lands, the bond remains unbroken. In our hearts, we are still side by side—brothers not just by birth, but by memory, love, and the silent understanding that no distance can erase where we began.

noticed, still standing mightily, a small Tamil temple, which I had frequented many times in my formative years. The remaining locals were still using it and within this enclosure, reigned the most profound silence. The God-like statues, scattered inside and around the temple, painted in red, black and white, the air and all the elements surrounding the building were peaceful. Rarely did the echo repeat the sermon of the priest who spent most of his time inside this holy place, meditating. Soft terracotta oil lamps illuminating the inside, whose flame could be seen from far, through the series of little Marvin Rotary windows carved on the four sides of the building. This innovative design provided a unique feature—a sash that rotates in a full circle allowing just the right amount of venting.

As I approached that place of worship I automatically felt a magnetic pull towards the entrance of the glass-panel doors. As I reached the doorway I placed my hand on the handle and it refused to turn because it was locked. I peeped through the glass pane and I saw an old man—he looked older than he probably was. With his eyes closed, he was seated legs crossed in front of the altar, dressed in a *dhoti, a rectangular piece of unstitched cloth, around 4.5 metres long, wrapped around the waist and the legs and knotted at the waist, resembling a long skirt***.** His feet were bare and a gold chain around his ankles, his face garnished with a long white beard, and he had tied the few white hairs he had, in a ponytail. Adorning his forehead was a *tilak—a mark made of ashes on a Hindu's forehead indicating his sectarian affiliation.*

I could see the expression on his face was dignified and approachable and I could feel myself bowing to him with respect. Astonishingly he opened his eyes and saw me and he returned my salutation.

After looking at me with earnestness, he signalled to me to come inside. Somehow it felt like I had gone in and I was seated on a mat in front of him having an imaginary conversation with him.

Coming from deep inside my head I heard him say, 'I am the village priest.'

To which I'd solemnly replied, 'I used to live around here, father.' There was trepidation in my voice, 'but that was many years ago when I was a little boy living in the thatch cottage which used to stand in the middle of that field outside there and now is no more.'

Suddenly I heard another voice say, 'Who are you talking to?'

I spun around and saw my brother Kisna standing there.

I looked at him, stunned. 'I—I did not know you were behind me.'

'I was not, I heard you muttering something and I came to be nosey,' he said staring at me.

'Muttering? Who, me? No!' I lied.

He was frowning. 'Hmmm. I heard you say, "What happened to the cottage?"

I had to quickly think of something clever. 'Oh that, I was just talking to myself.'

After clearing my throat, I asked my brother, 'Yes, what happened to the cottage?'

I was curious to know because I was born in it.

'A cyclone visited the island and took it away,' he replied.

'A cyclone took it away?' I echoed.

All the areas where the thatch terrace-houses once stood had been replaced with new houses made of bricks. The place where a sugarcane factory once stood, was in ruins and deserted. Stones and debris had covered the path where railway lines used to be for steam locomotives to pass carrying canes to the factory.

The beautiful memories of my childhood had been forever destroyed, but only in physical forms, not in my mind. The quietness and beauty of the environment I grew up in had been replaced by the annoyance of many kinds. A place I had so fondly loved and had cherished during my absence had turned out to be nothing but ancient history. Whilst I was away from it, I had yearned to behold and to hold it once more close to my bosom. Instead, my return made me feel neglected by it, and all my blissful emotions, perhaps somewhat irrational, had altered to bitterness and anger towards the developers and power-hungry decision makers, who most probably have no appreciation for nature.

After a brief silence, during which I leaned my face upon my hands in an attempt to recall the images of the past, I told Kisna of how surprised I was to see so much change, some for the better, and some for the worse.

'I was thinking if it was worth my coming to spend my retirement here, but I am sometimes made to feel like an alien from out of space in my birthplace,' I said to my brother.

I felt my throat getting drier and drier.

'You have been away far too long; you would be better off staying where you are.'

'I think you might well be right, Mauritius is not the right place for me anymore.'

'Of course, nothing is stopping you from coming for a holiday and enjoying your house.'

'True, true.'

'Why would you want to come and settle here anyway?'

I took a deep breath, then said, 'be… because I prefer my own country to any other, not because it is more beautiful but because I was brought up in it…Now that I am retired I thought it would be nice to be here and die here, but…'

Suddenly I felt a chill running through my spine and the words would not come out. I went silent.

'...but what?' Kisna wanted to know.

'It is proving more difficult than I had expected,' I replied.

'I say again. Stay where you are.'

My brother looked at me, shook his head slightly and then said, 'You were in a way destined to be somewhere else.'✍

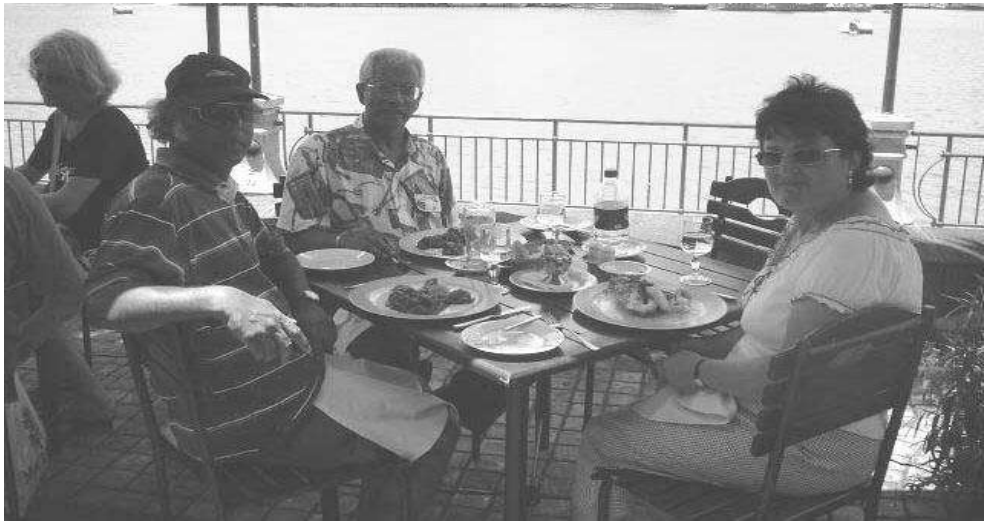
Our destiny…

Although my two brothers and I went our separate ways and founded a life for ourselves, I would like to believe that deep in our hearts we have always been together. Unfortunately though, as we have created our own families, our children have grown up almost in isolation having very little to do with each other. During that December 2003 visit to Mauritius, at a family reunion at Flic-En-Flacq, I was in pain to witness the shallowness of the bond between the cousins & nephews, particularly those from my two brothers. If I have a message for them it would simply be this: Whilst the past is not for you to change, the future is in your hands. You are not required to carry the burden of your parents. Their failures are theirs and theirs alone✍

"I was born in Beau Bois, where the sugarcane swayed like lullabies and the mountains watched over us like quiet elders—home was never just a place, it was a rhythm I carry still."

Another goodbye

Finally, It was time to say goodbye again. Strangely enough, unlike my previous visits and departures, whilst sitting in the lounge at SSR Airport it was a delight to see my two brothers, sister-in-laws, nieces, nephews and other relatives had taken time to come to the airport and bid us farewell. As I hugged and kissed my two brothers, I could not help thinking that age is catching up with us. Nevertheless, I hope we will see each other again!✍



They say the best way to a man's heart is through his stomach, but in this moment, it was more than just food—it was friendship, laughter, and the warmth of shared memories. From left to right *Syd, Parama Valaydon, Gina*

From L to R

Back row:
Gina, Syd, Navamah, Peddy with Rubina and Kisna

Front row:
David, Patricia, Nadia, Priscilla and Doraj

24th
December
1977

From L to R

Back row:
Syd, Gina, Devegi, Dessiga, Manee and Marday

Front row:
Doraj holding David, Navamah, Maligaye holding Patricia

24th
December
1977

December 1977

Gina showing off her figure on the beach in Mauritius.

My two children David and Patricia enjoying themselves with their cousins.

Standing:
Devegi, Unknown, Dasson and Dessiga

Kneeling:
David, Patricia and Maligaye

December 1977

Here I am at Flic-En-Flacq beach resort with my mum, my eldest brother Marday and his family.

From L to R:

My niece Devegi on my right and my wife Gina on my left with my daughter Patricia in the front. Next to my wife is my mum, then my sister in law Manie, my brother Marday.

Island Light and Family Ties: Île aux Cerfs, December 1998

December 1998 found Gina and David basking in the sun-drenched beauty of Île aux Cerfs, Mauritius—a slice of paradise where turquoise waters kissed the shore and time seemed to soften. In the company of Gina's brother Marday and his side of the family, the day unfolded like a cherished chapter in a family album: laughter echoing across the lagoon, shared stories weaving old bonds tighter, and the warmth of kinship as radiant as the island light. It was more than a holiday—it was a reunion of hearts, a moment suspended in joy, etched forever in the rhythm of waves and memory.

December 6th, 2003

Here is Gina at Le Morne resort hotel enjoying a moment at one of the best resorts the paradise island of Mauritius can offer.

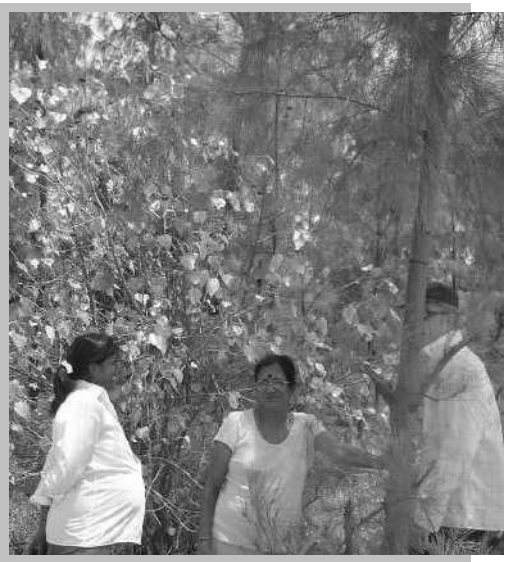
"It is easy to hate and it is difficult to love. This is how the whole scheme of things works. All good things are difficult to achieve; and bad things are very easy to get."

Confucius

Coconut Island & La Vanille (Mauritius)

A cruise on the Indian Ocean, a lunch on Coconut Island, an underwater adventure in the deep blue sea, and a day at the magical place of 'La Vanille', were just what the doctor ordered.
La Vanille breeds Nile Crocodiles imported from Madagascar, giant tortoises and other wild life.
Gina and I couldn't resist a ride.

Dec. 2003



From L to R: Priscilla, Peddy and Robert.

From L to R: Peddy, Rubina, Priscilla, David, and Nadia (in blue outfit)

Syd and Gina enjoying a ride on tortoise.

I am Steve Smallsman. Well perhaps not that small! By the way where is my wife Rubina?

Back row:

Rubina and Kisna

Front row:

Nadia and David

A Gift of Generosity: Flic-En-Flacq, December 2003

On December 4th, 2003, we found ourselves embraced by the warmth of both place and spirit at Devegi and Rajendra Motay's bungalow in Flic-En-Flacq. Their generous offer to let us use their home, free of charge, was more than hospitality—it was a gesture of deep kindness that turned our stay into something truly memorable. The bungalow, nestled near the sea, became a haven of laughter, reflection, and connection. It wasn't just a roof over our heads—it was a space filled with grace, where the rhythm of the waves echoed the generosity of dear friends.

The Place That Held Me First

The photo shows a quiet field in Beau Bois, Mauritius—where once my childhood home stood, now only the land remains, open and unspoken. The house is gone, but the earth remembers: the footsteps, the laughter, the scent of meals carried on the wind. In the stillness of that field, there's a kind of echo, not loud but persistent—a whisper of belonging that refuses to fade. It's not emptiness, but a canvas of memory, where the past blooms invisibly beneath the grass, and the soul of the place lingers in the light.

December 2003

▶ *Caudan, Port Louis, Mauritius. December 18, 2003, enjoying a lunch date with an old friend Parama Valaydon at one of the restaurants at Caudan.*

Maurice and David Chellen with Steve Smallman

After visiting the original Seven Coloured Earths in Chamarel, they drank in the lunar-like spectacle—rippling dunes of red, brown, violet, green, blue, purple, and yellow, nestled in lush vegetation with the Black River mountain range rising in the distance like a quiet sentinel. On their way, they paused to admire the majestic Chamarel Waterfall, the tallest single-drop cascade in Mauritius, plunging nearly 100 metres in a silver rush of sound and mist. Later, they wandered into the tortoise park, where gentle giants named Toto, Tizean, Rosette, Nini, Tizom, and Tifam moved with ancient grace. Originally from Aldabra in the Seychelles, these remarkable creatures can grow up to a metre long and live for more than 150 years—a living testament to endurance and quiet wisdom.

Beneath the surreal beauty of Chamarel's Coloured Earth in Mauritius, Gina and Maurice posed for a photo that captured more than just vibrant hues—it held a moment of wonder and connection. The layered sands behind them shimmered in shades of ochre, violet, and rust, as if nature itself had painted a backdrop for their presence. Standing amidst this geological marvel, their smiles reflected the joy of shared discovery and the quiet magic of being part of something timeless. It was a portrait not only of two people, but of memory, landscape, and the enduring warmth of kinship.

December 2003

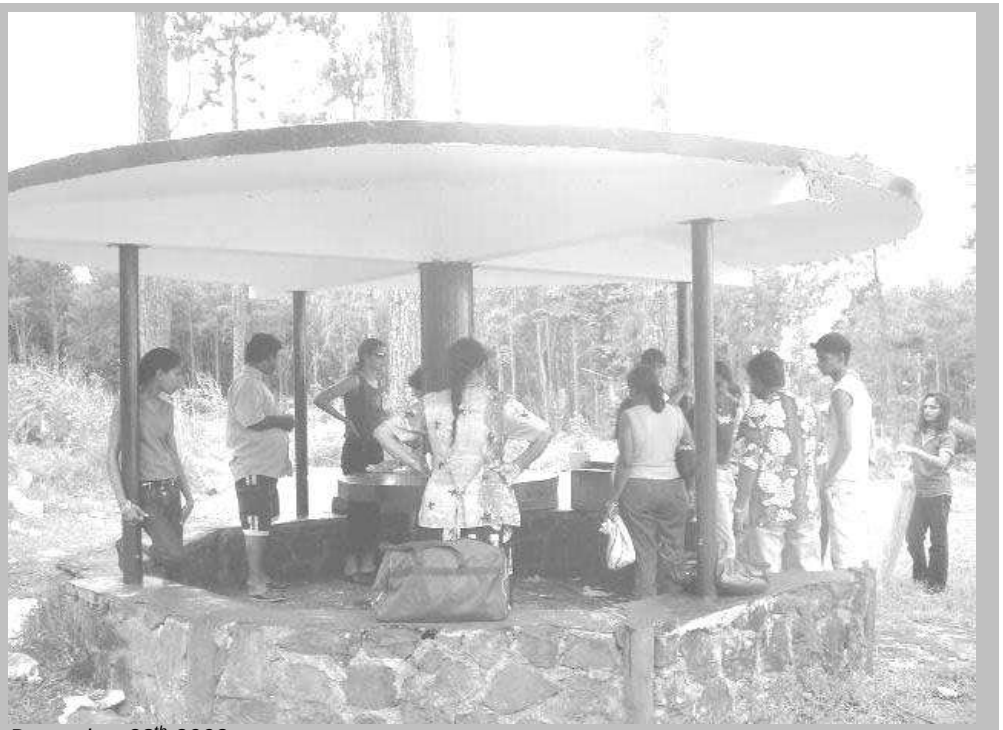
◀*Whilst at Grand-Bassin, Gina could not resist standing next to one of the Indian Gods for a picture. Once a year thousands of Indo-Mauritian process for miles to get to this river for customary rituals.*

► *Maurice (right) trading pleasant jokes to Brandon and his girl friend Lorraine (from Australia).*

December.2003.

A Christmas to Remember: Amba's Gift of Joy

Meeting my cousin Amba Chellen was a heartfelt treat, rekindling a memory that has never faded. I was very young when I spent a Christmas at his home, wide-eyed and full of wonder. That holiday became unforgettable—not just for the warmth of family, but for the kindness Amba showed. He gently persuaded his mother to buy me a little replica sports car, and in doing so, gave me my first real Christmas present. It wasn't just a toy—it was a symbol of belonging, of being seen and cherished. That moment, wrapped in generosity and joy, still glows in my heart like festive lights long after the season has passed.



December 28th 2003

A quiet picnic at Mare-Aux-Vacoas with my brother Marday and his side of the family during my 3rd visit in Mauritius. It was a nice outing. It reminded me of the pleasant time I spent there with my classmates during my primary school days. The area seems to have stood the test of time – it was more or less as I remembered it 35 years ago.

Young Sanjiven on his tricycle—three wheels, endless joy, and a journey just beginning.

Brenda and Sanjiven, captured side by side, radiate a quiet warmth that speaks of connection and shared joy. Whether it's a fleeting moment or a cherished reunion, their presence together feels natural and comforting—like two threads woven gently into the same tapestry. There's a spark in Sanjiven's eyes and a calm grace in Brenda's smile, suggesting a bond that goes beyond the frame. It's a portrait of kinship, laughter, and the kind of ease that only grows with time.

I was not alone

As Malta is much closer to England than Mauritius, and as our financial situation improved we were able to get to it more frequently, though not that often. To my amazement Gina too felt like a stranger in her own country. There were many places where she had never been. We once went to Malta, and instead of staying with her parents - as we would normally do, we jointly decided to check ourselves in a hotel as tourists so that she too could experience beautiful Malta in a way she never did before.

I cannot hide the fact that I do feel deprived as a child, but in many ways growing up in an under-privileged family has without any doubt made me a better person. I am much more possessive and mindful of things I own, and much more appreciative of opportunities that have come my way since being in England. As the expression goes, 'I tend not to look at any gift horse in the mouth.' I am lucky too, to have a wife who although comes from a quite well to do family, she always walks a mile to save a penny or two when she shops…

The Republic of Malta consists of Malta, Gozo, Comino and two other very small uninhabited islands. It is situated in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. The climate is warm and healthy with mild moist winters and dry hot summers. Having been born and lived in Mauritius for twenty years, I was surprised to find Malta too hot for my liking. One of my most memorable places I visited was the Popeye Village at Anchor Bay, constructed in 1979 for the filming of the Robert Evans, Robert Altman's production of 'Popeye', released by Paramount and Walt Disney. ✍

"…and then, we returned to Malta—not to fulfil tradition, but to rewrite it. Gina walked its streets not as a daughter, but as a seeker. In that hotel room, we weren't guests of the past—we were authors of the present."

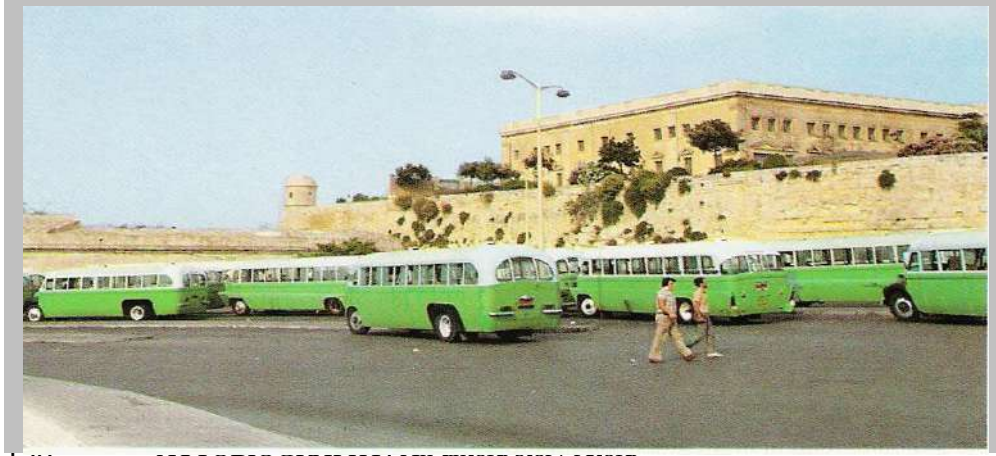
Summer 1996
Gina and I enjoying a bit of sun and a splash on the beautiful island of Comino, Malta. The best place to be when you want to be alone and free.

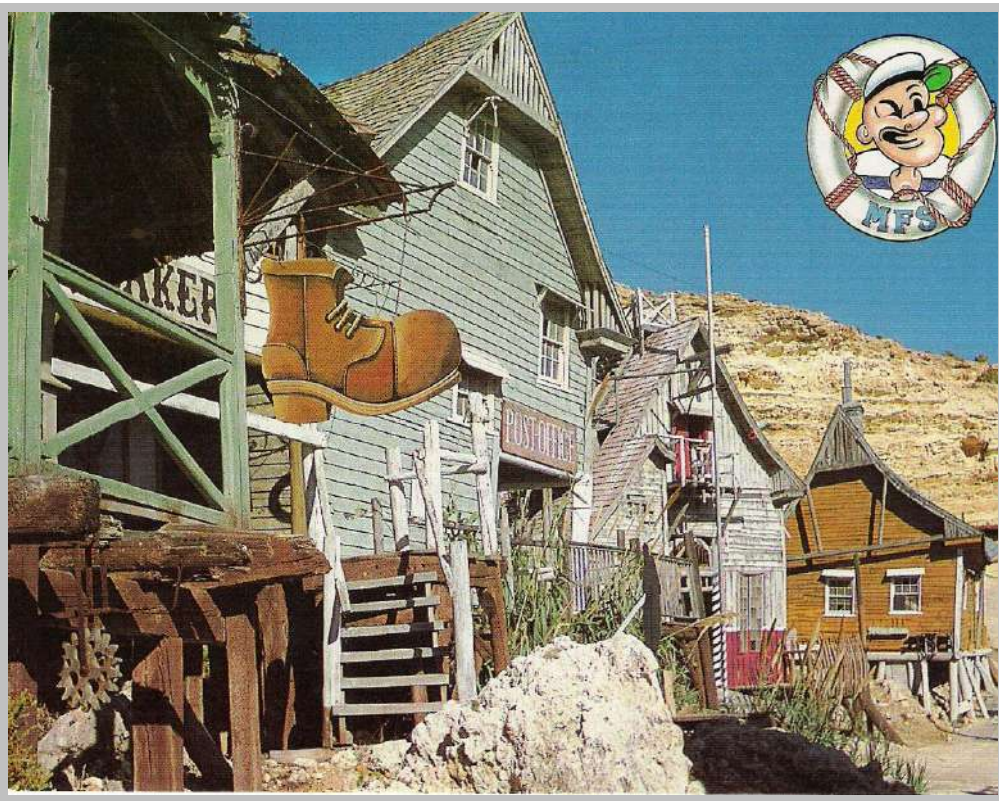
My 40th birthday

Gina and I took time out to celebrate my 40th birthday. Our daughter chose the romantic city of Paris for us. When we were not boozing we would go sight seeing. A boat-trip downstream proved quite irresistible, even if it did cost an arm and a leg. A visit to the Louvre to feast our eyes on Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting of "Mona Lisa, la Giosconda" is unforgettable. A stroll down Champs-Elysées brought back memories of our early years together. After having got to the top of the Eiffel

In the heart of Paris, beneath the soft glow of candlelight and the hum of quiet conversation, Gina and I shared a tender meal that marked forty years of love, laughter, and unwavering companionship. The city of romance seemed to pause for us, wrapping our table in its timeless charm as we toasted to decades of devotion. Each glance held the weight of memory—triumphs, trials, and the gentle grace of growing together. It wasn't just dinner; it was a celebration of a bond that had weathered seasons and blossomed anew, a quiet symphony of two hearts still dancing in step after all these years.

Buses at the City gate bus station, Valetta. These green buses are the popular leftover from British Colonial times… they are waiting to take passengers off to places around Malta.





The Popeye village *–*

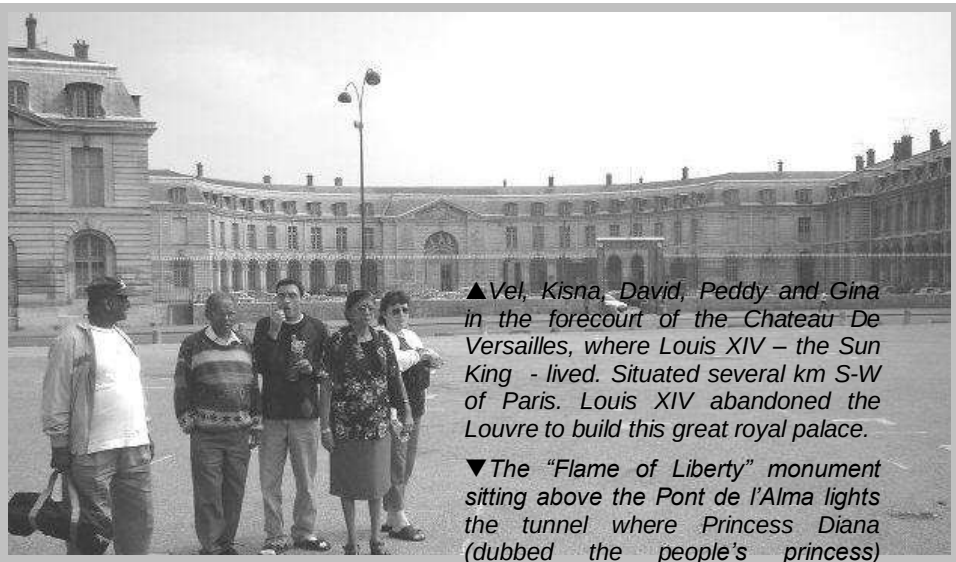
the film set of the 1989 musical production where Popeye discovers Newfoundland and call it a sweet-haven. Al the special wood shingles used in the construction of the roof toys were imported from Canada. The construction itself took over seven months to complete. Using a 65 man construction crew with 8 tons of nails and two thou sands gallons of paint.

▲ *Gina in shopping. Centre in France with Val Vencatachellum*

◄ *Gina amusing herself with the birds in Paris*

Steps of Grace: A Sacred Ascent in Montmartre

In August 2002, Kisna, Peddy, Gina, David, and Vel (affectionately known as Val) climbed the steps leading to the majestic Sacré-Coeur, each footfall echoing with anticipation and quiet reverence. The basilica stood like a sentinel above Paris, its white domes gleaming against the summer sky, welcoming pilgrims and wanderers alike. As they ascended together, laughter mingled with awe, and the moment became more than a sightseeing stop—it was a shared passage into beauty, memory, and connection. The climb was gentle, but the feeling was profound: a sacred pause in the rhythm of travel, where friendship and faith met on the hilltop.



▲*Vel, Kisna, David, Peddy and Gina in the forecourt of the Chateau De Versailles, where Louis XIV – the Sun King - lived. Situated several km S-W of Paris. Louis XIV abandoned the Louvre to build this great royal palace.*

▼*The "Flame of Liberty" monument sitting above the Pont de l'Alma lights the tunnel where Princess Diana (dubbed the people's princess) crashed to her death on August 31, 1997.*

▲*Gina in France in the Garden of 'Châteaux de Versailles'*

Paris, 1985
◀*While we were in Paris on my 40th birthday we were pleasantly surprised to find Rajendra Motay there too. What a nice coincidence!*

August 30, 2002

Sitting in front of the Louvre: (from right to left): Kisna and Peddy, while Vel eves-dropped on Gina's conversation with some Maltese visitors seen on her right.

The Louvre, originally a royal chateau constructed by Philippe Auguste in 1204. Charles V (1364 to 1380) transformed it and in the 29th century it was completely rebuilt by Percier and Fontaine

Strolling down the Champs-Elysées towards Place de la Concorde to see Cleopatra's needle.

▶*Peddy, Gina, Kisna and David visiting Paris*

Tower (324 metres tall) we felt on top of the world. Gina and I tried to use the 1802 steps to come down. Well we tried! We re-visited Paris with Kisna and Peddy in summer 2002. My cousin Val took us around and made sure we had a good time. We discovered what a good cook he was. I can recommend his pilchard in rich tomato sauce, but sadly he's passed away. ✍

Let's go to London...

▲August 1997

Here were are:
Gina, Nigee, Rajen and David enjoying each other's company on the bank of River Thames having a rest on a floating ship overlooking London Bridge.

▲*Whilst in London, Gina could not resist paying a visit to the Royals… (at Madame Tussaud of course!)*

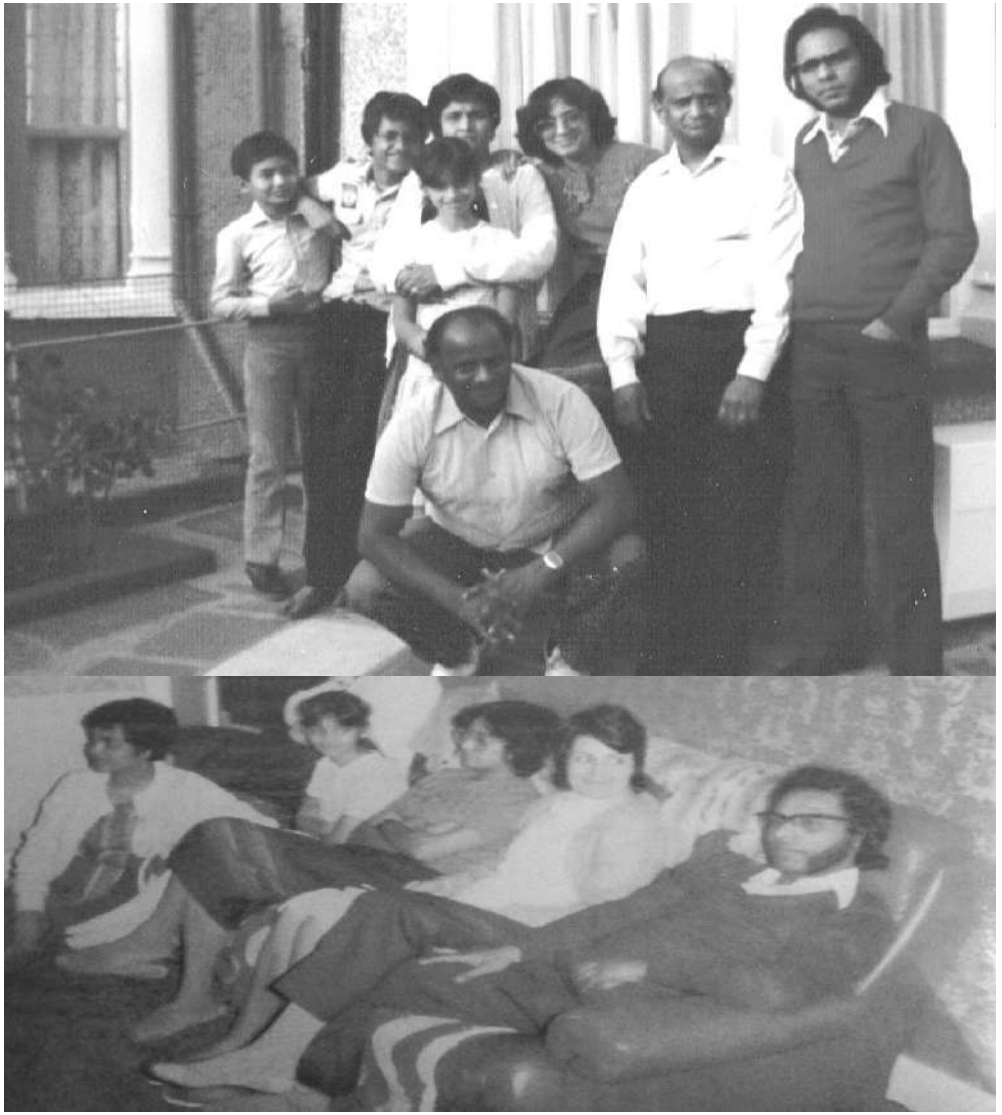
►*…Gina and I decide the best way to see it was to take a open-top bus.*

After 22 years in England, Gina and I had decided to spend a day in London - the city that never sleeps. Strangely enough, my brothers when they came to England probably saw more of London than we have in the entire years we've been in UK. I suppose the country one lives in is always the last place to be explored. ✍

One in a million

Spending a bit of time with my cousin Rajen Vencatachellum (now deceased) was one of the best moments. He was very kind hearted. We met a few times at his place in London and I've had the pleasure of his company at my place in Kent on a number of occasions. One thing though, you should never ask this guy for directions. On one occasion he was in my car giving me directions how to get to his place. After half an hour of crazy driving I discovered he was as blind as a bat! ✍

From Left to Right
Syd, Gina, Nigee, David.



When in Rome or Venice or Florence…

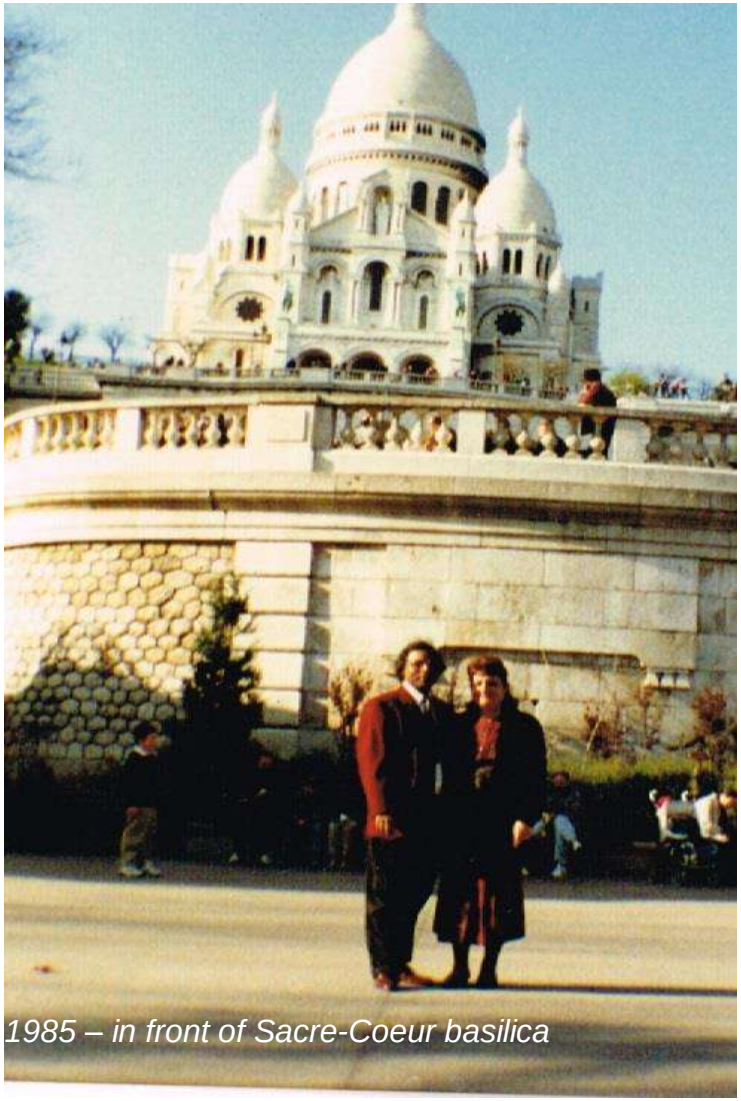
Having been married for 35 years, in August 2001, Gina and I decided to celebrate our wedding anniversary in style. We chose ROME as the place to go and re-affirm our commitments to each other. Although, when we got there, there were no gladiatorial combats and wild beast hunts to entertain us, we nevertheless felt privileged standing amongst the ruins of this huge theatre - The Coliseum - that once housed 70,000 spectators. A very long time ago, I watched a wonderful film entitled "Ben Hur" featuring Charleston Heston. Never in my wildest dream did I ever think that one day I would visit the very circus where the famous race was filmed. That was a real treat. Our guided visit to the Pantheon was quite educational. It was a delight seeing the interior of this beautiful temple. Other memorable parts of our visit to Rome was being able to feast our ageing eyes on some of the most beautiful works of art in Rome, sailing down the Venetian canal in a Gondola, leaning against the tower of Pisa or was it the other way round? ✍

The Coliseum, the most imposing of all the monuments in ancient Rome, built in the middle of the broad valley between Palatine, Caelian and Esquiline hills. Besides the Colosseum stood the Colossus of Nero, a giant statue of gilt bronze.

A round trip in 31 days

In September 2008 my cousin Vel (AKA Val) Vencatachellum was planning to celebrate his 80th birthday in New Zealand where his brother Vadivel lives and he

Where myth meets marble — The Trevi Fountain, Rome's Baroque masterpiece, spills stories as old as empire. Toss a coin, whisper a wish, and let the waters carry your heart back to the Eternal City.



1985 – in front of Sacre-Coeur basilica

From L to R
Standing up
Edwin, Syd, Paul and Peter

Sitting down
Rose, |gins, Evelyn and Mary

My brother-in-law Edwin is very skilful in making furniture

Paul, husband of Evelyn owns and manages a small supermarket with his brother.

Peter, husband of Mary is a primary school teacher turned businessman

Evelyn works as a nurse in a private home

Rose and Mary are women of leisure

A Gondola of Dreams: Gina and Syd in Rome's Embrace

Drifting gently through the waters, Gina and Syd shared a magical moment that felt suspended in time—Rome unfolding around them like a living fresco. Though gondolas belong to Venice, this poetic image captures their quiet reverence for the Eternal City, where ancient beauty met the intimacy of their gaze. The soft ripple of water mirrored the rhythm of their hearts, and every stone bridge, every golden light, seemed to whisper blessings on their journey. In that tender silence, Rome became more than a destination—it became a witness to love, a backdrop to a bond that deepens with every shared breath.

▲ *Before*

THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS

Now ▼

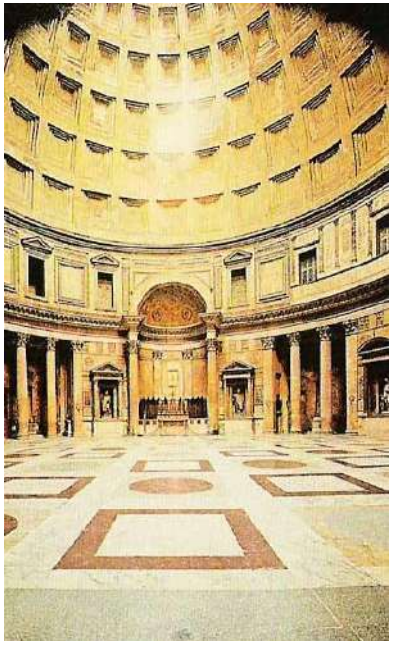
The Circus Maximus. *This was used for chariot racing and is considered the largest building ever put up for entertainment purposes. The circus measured no less than 600 m in length and 200 m in width and could accommodate up to 300,000 spectators. The famous race in the film 'Ben Hur' was shot here.*

The Patheon

A splendid temple in honour of all the Olympian gods, erected by Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, son-in-law and counsel or of the Emperor Augustus, between A.D 27 and 25. The temple therefore became known as the Patheon, a Greek name meaning "of all the Gods".

◀ Outside

▶Inside



The Pantheon*—majestic in both its silence and splendour—offers two distinct experiences that echo through time. Inside, beneath the vast oculus, light spills like a divine whisper onto ancient marble, illuminating centuries of reverence and architectural genius. The dome seems to breathe with history, inviting reflection and awe. Outside, the grand columns rise like sentinels, framing the piazza where life hums and footsteps echo against stone. Whether standing beneath its celestial eye or gazing from the square, the Pantheon holds you in a moment where past and present meet—timeless, dignified, and unforgettable.*

extended an invitation to us. Instead of simply flying to New Zealand, Gina and I decided to take a mini-round the world trip. We opted to fly to five countries. We flew from UK to LA (Los Angeles, USA), and stayed at the International hotel, Avenue of the Stars, for a week and visited Hollywood Studio, Beverley Hills, Paul Gaitey museum and sampled some delicious American dishes and feasted our eyes on the dwellings of Hollywood stars like Peter Falk, Demi Moore, Bruce Willis, Terri Hatcher, to mention but a few and admired some of the beautiful sights LA had to offer the tourists. They are memories that we will treasure for a long time to come.

From there we flew to Oakland, New Zealand. The two weeks we spent there was yet another rare opportunity to mix with the Kiwi people and see some of the wonders of the world. It was pleasing to meet some of the Vencatachellum's brothers in one place and spend some quality time in their company. The one sad thing about that trip was that my cousin Seven Vencatachellum died one week after he had returned to his home in UK.

At the end of our stay in New Zealand we flew to Sydney, Australia to be welcomed by our niece Priscilla, who was residing there with her family at the time. To our surprise, my brother Kisna and his wife Peddy happened to be holidaying there. We spent several hours together visiting various tourist attractions. We even visited the capital town Canberra, which I had so much heard from previously. The Opera house in Sydney was probably one of the highlights of that trip. The ten days we stayed there were well spent.

As planned, from Sydney we flew to Bangkok, Thailand (previously known as Siam). Although the hotel was nice, and most of the places we visited were worthwhile, it is not a place where I would contemplate to live. Being the most populated city of Thailand, it is very crowded and living conditions looked much to be desired. It has a crippling traffic congestion and severe air pollution. Visiting some of the sights such as the Grand Palace and major Buddhist temples was quite a treat. The Bangkok National Museum and the Royal Barge National Museum were interesting. A boat trip on the Chao Phraya and Thonburi's canals offered views of some of the city's traditional architecture and ways of life on the waterfront. The Taling Chan Floating Market was a spectacular sight.

To complete our trip before returning back to UK, we flew to Hong Kong. The

place where 'East meets West'. Hong Kong's cuisine is one to be tasted. There are no fewer than 1,223 skyscrapers in Hong Kong and it has more buildings higher than 500 ft (or 150m) than any other city. The hotel was first class. Altogether, it was a trip of a life time, and we felt so lucky to have been able to undertake it. ✍

Vel Vencatachellum
celebrating his 80th birthday in New Zealand

Gina and Syd in New Zealand—
Two Souls, One Journey Through Nature's Masterpiece
Amid the breathtaking landscapes of Aotearoa, Gina and Syd sit side by side—framed by mountains, mist, and memory.
Their presence brings warmth to the wild, a quiet harmony between love and adventure.
This moment isn't just a snapshot; it's a thread in their tapestry, woven with wonder and the joy of shared discovery.

◀ *Gina in New Zealand*

▼*Syd, Gina and Seven Vencatachellum in New Zealand*

Syd Down Under—A Gentle Moment with a Kangaroo in the Heart of Sydney
In the golden hush of an Australian afternoon, i knelt with quiet reverence, stroking and feeding a kangaroo as if greeting an old soul.
The scene unfolded in my wild heart, where nature and tenderness met in perfect stillness. There was something timeless in the exchange—two beings, worlds apart, sharing a moment of trust.
t wasn't just a tourist's delight; it was a whisper of connection, a brush with the sacred pulse of the land. For me, it became a memory etched not just in photographs, but in feeling.

In the radiant hush of Australia's Garden of Light, Gina and Nadia move like twin petals caught in the same breeze—distinct yet inseparable.
Their friendship rooted in quiet resilience and shared wonder, blossoms with each passing season, drawing strength from the soil of laughter, loss, and luminous growth.
Together, they are not merely in bloom—they are the bloom, a living testament to what flourishes when kindred spirits find each other in the wild beauty of the world.

My wife, Gina sitting gracefully in the soft glow of a Hong Kong hotel lounge, her presence as composed as the city skyline beyond.
Amid the quiet hum of international travellers and clinking teacups, she is a portrait of calm and quiet elegance—reflective, poised, and perfectly at home in the moment.

Here we are soaking up the vibrant energy of Bangkok—where every moment feels like an adventure. From bustling street markets to serene temple strolls, Gina's smile say it all. Tuk-tuk rides, spicy bites, and golden sunsets—Bangkok served up memories we'll never forget.

Gina and Syd in Bangkok

Panoramic view of Hong Kong island skyline

Belgium here we come

On 13th October 2013 Gina and I decided it was time to unwind with a relaxing few days on an escorted tour to Bruges - Belgium. Its beauty and tranquility are outstanding, as befits the most perfectly preserved medieval town in Europe. The atmosphere was totally unique, especially when taking a stroll by one of the canals or sipping a coffee in the Old Market Square with the 13th Century Flemish chimes ringing out from the belfry. Bruges, also known as 'Venice of the North', has a captivating serenity. Getting there was as easy as taking an early

Under the Arch in Bruges: A Once-in-a-Lifetime Embrace

Our first and only visit to Bruges was nothing short of lovely—a quiet jewel of cobbled streets and timeless charm. Here we are, Syd, Gina, and David, gathered under the arch like a living postcard, framed by history and bathed in soft Belgian light. The moment holds a hush of wonder, as if the city itself paused to welcome us. Laughter echoed gently through the stone, and for that brief time, Bruges became ours—a memory etched in warmth, where the ordinary turned magical simply because we were together.

Here we are in Bruges, Belgium.
Gina, posing In Market Square,

In the heart of Hollywood, beneath the iconic shimmer of Universal Studios, Gina strikes a pose that captures more than just a moment—it channels the spirit of cinematic wonder. Framed by the magic of Los Angeles, her presence radiates joy and quiet confidence, as if she has stepped into a scene written just for her. The backdrop hums with stories, but it's Gina who brings the frame to life—poised, playful, and perfectly at home in a place where dreams meet daylight. This photo isn't just a souvenir; it's a snapshot of a star in her own story.

During our unforgettable five-day adventure in Los Angeles, my wife and I had the chance to step into the mesmerizing world of movie magic with a visit to the Hollywood props room. Surrounded by iconic set pieces, vintage costumes, and fantastical creations from decades of film history, we felt like we'd wandered into a cinematic treasure trove. The atmosphere buzzed with nostalgia and creativity, each item whispering stories from the silver screen. Capturing the moment in a photo felt essential—an emblem of our shared love for storytelling and the surreal charm of Hollywood.

afternoon Euro star service from London St. Pancras Inter national to Lille, arriving approximately 1 hour 30 minutes later. A coach then took us to the Academia hotel in the heart of Bruges old town, transfer time was approximately one hour.

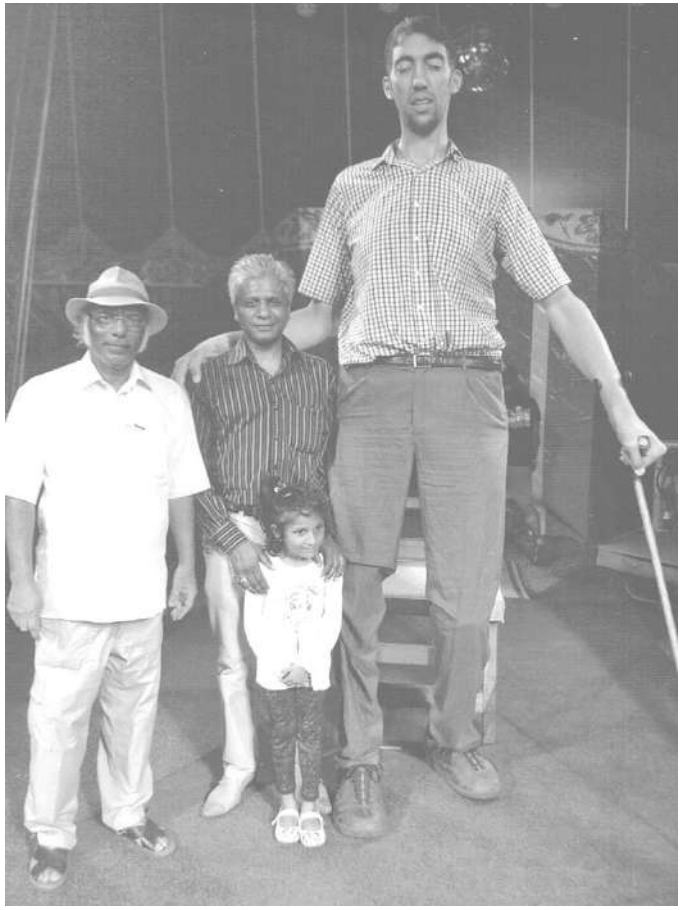
A walk of beautiful Bruges town really does show off its charm perfectly. The whole atmosphere of Bruges was pure romance and really reflects the true spirit of medieval Flanders. The Bruges streets were crammed with fascination and are centered on the main square, dominated by the Belfry; and when the unique old Flemish chimes are heard, the atmosphere is perfect. After climbing the 366 steps of the tower, the view was breathtaking. We could see the City Hall, the old Law Courts and the 'Basilica of the Holy Blood' in which is housed some of Jesus' blood. The Notre Dame Church which houses Michelangelo's beautiful Madonna and Child, carved in pure white marble was also another good attraction.

Belgium and Flanders in particular, is very famous for brewing beer, indeed there are over 500 varieties throughout the country. One of the features of brewing in Belgium is the great variety of types of beer and ingredients used, even things as diverse as cherries and oats! Our tour to Bruges would not have been complete without a visit to a brewery and tasting their produce.

The boat trip of some of Bruges' canals, gave us an interesting view of the town. A visit to some of the places made famous during the First World War was of particular interest to Gina. The main visit was to Ypres, the centre of British activity in Belgium and although the town was flattened, it has been restored to its original appearance. Ypres is the home of the Menin Gate, the memorial to the missing where the last post is played every evening at 8 o'clock. We also visited Hill 62, more commonly known as Sanctuary Wood to see some preserved trenches. Perhaps the most moving part of the visit was the Tyne Cot cemetery at Passchen-

"To be born in beauty and barred from its embrace is a sorrow only the soul remembers—but even unseen, the island etched itself into me."

[Author's note: This is a personal reflection written in 2025.]



From Left to Right
Syd,, Doraj, Keerthika,

standing small next to tallest
living male in the world—the one and only
Sultan Kosen

daele, which is the largest in the British sector.

Bruges chocolates are known throughout the world and so a visit to one of the two establishments which still makes chocolates by traditional methods was a must. The chocolates, we were told, are only made from the finest ingredients and during the demonstration we learnt all about this delicious craft and Gina even bought some for us and our two grand daughters, Olivia and Mia.✍

Sultan Kosen

In 2016 I visited Mauritius again and my nephew Dr. Devadassen Chellen took me to a circus at Bagatelle. One thing that would perhaps make me remember this day for a very long time is I met 33-year-old Sultan Kosen, a Turkish farmer. He was born on 10th December 1982 in Mardin, Turkey. What made my meeting with him so special is that he is the tallest living male in the world as recorded In the Guinness World Book of Record. He measures 254 Centimeters (8 ft 4. in).

Sultan lives with his parents, three brothers and sister, who are all of normal height. He was unable to finish his education because of his height, so instead he worked part time as a farmer. Despite his height, he claims to enjoy a normal lifestyle and enjoys playing card and computer games with his friends.

He describes the advantages of being tall as seeing a great distance and being able to help his family with domestic tasks such as changing light bulbs and hanging curtains. He lists disadvantages as not being able to find clothes his size or shoes that fit his enormous 36.5 cm feet and even finds it very difficult to fit into a car!

In October 2013 after completing his first tour of Tahiti with Bruno Loyale and The Magic Circus of Samoa, Sultan married a lovely Syrian-born lady who is ten years younger than himself. In his interview he said that his biggest problem with his wife is the communication problem, not that he is much taller than his wife. He said he speaks Kurdish and Turkish but his wife speaks only Arabic but as his adopted papa Bruno Loyale told him……"when there's love…size doesn't matter" and Sultan agrees!

Having had the opportunity to see and more so, to stand by Sultan Kosen who out of 7 billion people on this planet is the tallest man in the world is, for me, a moment I will always remember and treasure. What made it even doubly special, I also had the opportunity to share this moment with my grand-niece Keerthika who at the time was the shortest girl, but I am sure in time she would grow taller (hopefully not as tall as Sultan).

That first return to my homeland in 1977 was more than a holiday—it was a reckoning. The island I had longed for, dreamed of, and mourned in silence did not greet me as the son it had lost. It welcomed me, yes, with familiar scents and voices, but something had shifted. The streets knew my name, yet not my footsteps. My mother's embrace was warm, but time had etched new lines into her face—lines I hadn't earned the right to witness. I saw my brothers, my nieces, the new children whose names I barely knew, and I smiled through the ache of being both guest and kin. That visit planted a question deep within me: what does it mean to belong to a place that no longer belongs to you? Years later, I tried to answer it—not with prose, but with verse.✍

Mauritius—An Island Both Mine and Not

I left at twenty, bright with flight,
To chase a life across the sea—
The greys of England, bold and tight,
Took root and made a home of me.

Four times I turned to tropic flame,
Returned to kin, to salt and sand,
But each arrival bore the same—
A stranger in my motherland.

Now age has loosened work and time,

I tend the soil I still possess,
Though every visit feels a climb
Through customs I cannot confess.

They speak with warmth, yet walk with ways
That jar against my tempered view,
A paradise that wilts and frays
When beauty hides a bitter hue.

And yet, I owe the dawn its light—
That island carved my early name.
It gave me roots, the strength of flight,
Though now I bear a foreign flame.

If not for ties and bricks and blood,
My feet would never touch its shore.
Still, I respect the rise, the flood—
Mauritius opened my first door.

Its trees remember who I was—
The girl with eyes of fire and grace,
Yet branches whisper without pause:
You've changed too much to take this place.

I walk its roads with borrowed tread,
As kin embrace me, yet with care.
They greet my voice but tilt their head—
It sounds too crisp, too foreign there.

And in the market, scents collide—
Sweet mangoes, smoke, and sea-salt air.
I buy the fruit, but step aside—
Not local, though I once lived there.

Still, in each wave, my childhood hums,
The calls of cousins, football games,
The songs my mother softly strummed—
These rise like old, remembered flames.

The peacock cried at dusk back then—
A feathered herald, proud, alone.
Its plume remains within my pen,
A symbol I have made my own.

Though distance stretched its silent line,
My story keeps the island near.
Mauritius, half of what is mine—
And half I honour year by year.

My friends of youth now scattered wide,
Their names like shells upon the tide—
Some faded, some too soon withdrawn,
Their laughter echoes in the dawn.

A woman named Fareeda carved my name
In bark that's long since split with rain.
She vanished in the swell of time—
One photo left, one shadowed frame.

The elders sat on woven mats,
Their wisdom steeped in spice and lore.
I watched them fade like temple cats,
Now incense fills the space they bore.

My mother served with quiet hands,
Her curry rich, her stories bold.
She died while I was in a land
Too far to touch the hands I'd hold.

Each grave I visit feels unspoken—

As if the silence guards the love.
I offer prayer, though ties feel broken—
Yet know their spirits rise above.

So here I stand, where sky meets shore,
To bless the paths I've walked before.
With tears that taste of mango rain,
I whisper thanks through joy and pain.

Farewell to trees that knew my name,
To friends once bright as morning flame.
Their laughter, tucked in memory's thread,
Still sings, though many now have fled.

Farewell to kin whose hands once fed
My spirit when the day turned red.
They sleep beneath familiar skies—
I leave, but never say goodbyes.

Mauritius holds what I can't keep—
Old songs, lost time, and dreamful sleep.
Its heart and mine no longer blend,
Yet I shall love it to the end.✍

The Legacy: A Life Woven in Love

Legacy isn't just what we leave behind—it's what we live into, day by day, breath by breath. For Gina and me, our marriage became more than a private bond; it grew into a living testament. To resilience. To devotion. To the quiet, unwavering power of choosing each other—not just once, but again and again, through seasons of joy and sorrow, through change and stillness. It was never about perfection. It was about presence. About showing up with grace, even when the road was steep or the silence deep.

We didn't set out to be role models. We simply tried to love well, to honour the promise we made not just with words, but with the way we lived. Yet over time, our story began to ripple outward.

I watched Gina honour our marriage through language—through the poetry she wove into our lives, the dedications she crafted, the way she would defend me when she saw others trying to take advantage of me. And I tried to do the same—not through verse, but through action. Through loyalty. Through the quiet promise of presence. I held her hand not just in celebration, but in silence. I stood beside her not just in triumph, but in uncertainty. That, too, was love.

Legacy lived in the way we celebrated. Our anniversaries weren't just dates on a calendar—they were milestones etched in memory. Markers of survival, of growth, of joy. We didn't need grand parties or elaborate gifts. A shared meal, a walk beneath the stars, a glance that said "we're still here"—that was enough. Those moments became sacred, not because they were loud, but because they were true.

We honoured those who came before us. Gina often spoke of her parents, George and Assunta, with reverence and gratitude. Their love shaped her, and through her, shaped us. I carried the memory of my own family in Mauritius like a quiet flame—steady, enduring, illuminating our path. Together, we tried to build a life that would make them proud. A life stitched with kindness, with courage, with the kind of love that doesn't fade but deepens.

Now, as we approach our Emerald anniversary, we find ourselves reflecting not just on what we've lived, but on what we'll leave. Not just in photos or keepsakes, but in the way we've loved. In the way we've forgiven. In the way we've held each other through it all. Our legacy isn't a monument—it's a melody. It's the way our children and grandchildren speak of us. It's the rituals they carry forward. It's the strength they draw from knowing that love, real love, is possible.

If our story can offer comfort, inspiration, or even a moment of recognition to someone else—then we've done more than love. We've shared it. We've passed it on. And in that sharing Legacy, we've come to understand, is not a single act or achievement—it's a mosaic of moments, stitched together by intention and heart. It lives in the way we've shown up for each other, not just in celebration but in

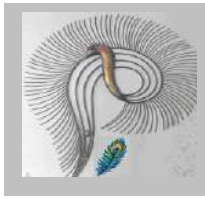
challenge. In the quiet mornings when words weren't needed. In the long walks where silence spoke volumes. In the way Gina's hand found mine in crowded rooms, reminding me that no matter where we were, we were home.

It lives in our children and grandchildren, too—in the way they carry our stories, our sayings, our spirit. We see echoes of our love in their laughter, in their choices, in the way they hold each other close. And when they ask about us, we hope they'll say not just that we loved, but that we loved well. That we made space for each other's growth. That we forgave with grace. That we never stopped learning how to be better partners, better people.

Legacy is also found in the symbols we've cherished—the Malta stamp that led to our marriage, the peacock that dances through Gina's poetry, the tree that anchors our family's story. These aren't just metaphors. They're vessels of meaning, reminders of the mystery and magic that has shaped our path. We've turned ordinary objects into sacred touchstones, and in doing so, we've taught those around us to see the extraordinary in the everyday.

As we look ahead, we know that legacy isn't something we'll one day leave behind—it's something we're still creating. With every tribute Gina writes, with every story I share, with every ritual we pass down, we're weaving a tapestry that will outlive us. And if, in that tapestry, someone finds comfort, courage, or a glimpse of what love can be—then we've done more than build a life. We've built a legacy that sings.

Legacy also lives in the way we've embraced change—not as something to fear, but as something to grow through. Over the years, Gina and I have reinvented ourselves many times: as parents, as grandparents, as artists, as companions navigating the shifting tides of time. We've learned that love isn't static—it evolves, deepens, and sometimes surprises us. There were seasons of uncertainty, yes, but also seasons of renewal, where we rediscovered each other in new light. That willingness to adapt, to listen, to keep choosing each other—that, too, is part of our legacy.



"Legacy isn't what we leave behind—it's what we build into others that outlives us."

We've tried to live with intention. To make our home a sanctuary, not just for ourselves but for those we welcome in. Gina's gift for creating rituals—whether through poetry, photography, or the simple act of lighting a candle—has turned ordinary days into sacred ones. I've watched her transform moments into memories, weaving meaning into the fabric of our lives. And I've tried to match that devotion with my own quiet offerings: a steady hand, a listening ear, a heart that never stopped learning how to love better.

Legacy is also about what we've taught—sometimes with words, often through example. We've taught our children and grandchildren that love is not just a feeling, but a practice. That forgiveness is strength. That vulnerability is courage. That showing up, even when it's hard, is the truest form of devotion. We've taught them that legacy isn't about grandeur—it's about grace. About the way you treat others. About the stories you tell and the silences you honour.

And now, as we look back and forward at once, we understand that our legacy is not just ours. It belongs to everyone who's walked beside us, who's shared a meal, a laugh, a tear. It belongs to those who've seen us falter and rise. To those who've felt seen, heard, and loved in our presence. It belongs to the generations who will carry our spirit in their own way—through their choices, their art, their relationships.

We may not know exactly how we'll be remembered. But if our love has left even a small imprint—on a heart, on a life, on a moment—then we've done what we came here to do. We've lived our legacy. And it will keep unfolding, long after we're gone, in the stories others tell, in the rituals they keep, and in the quiet strength of love that endures.

Legacy also lives in the quiet courage of showing up—for each other, for family, for the life we've built. Gina and I have faced our share of storms, but we've weathered them not by braving them alone, but by leaning into each other. There were days when words failed, when grief or uncertainty clouded the path ahead. But even then, we found a way to reach across the silence. A touch. A glance. A shared breath. That, too, is legacy—the kind that doesn't shout, but endures.

We've learned that legacy isn't always visible. It's felt. It's in the way our

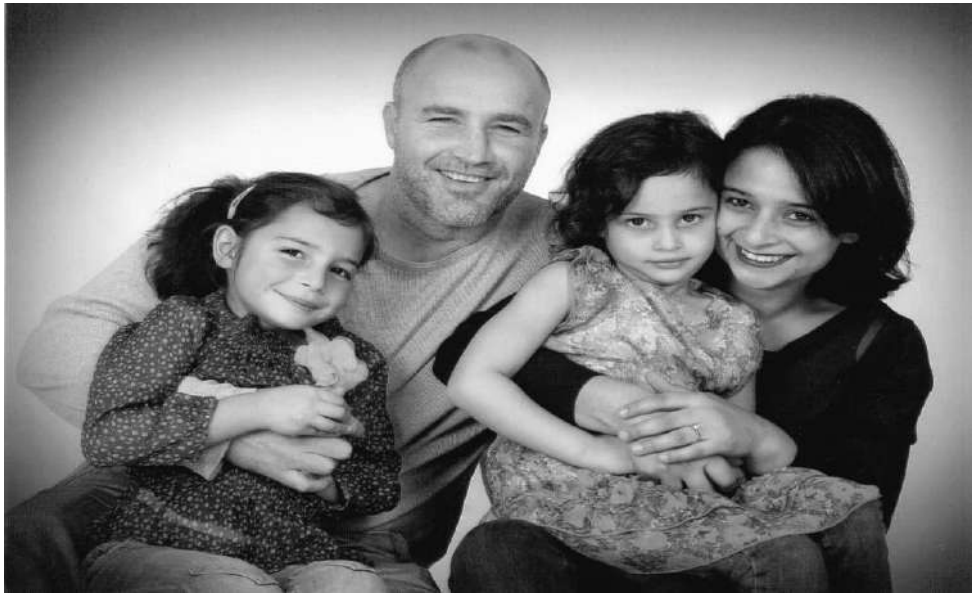
grandchildren smile when they hear our stories. In the way Mia and Olivia carry forward the spirit of devotion and creativity that Gina has poured into every tribute, every caption, every ritual. It's in the way our children speak of us—not just with pride, but with tenderness. And it's in the way we've made space for others to feel seen, heard, and held. That's the kind of legacy that lingers long after the last page is turned.

There's also a legacy in the way we've embraced joy. Not just the grand moments, but the small ones—the peals of laughter over a shared joke, the quiet delight of watching birds in the garden, the spontaneous dance in the kitchen when a favourite song plays. These are the moments that stitch a life together. They are the threads of gold that run through the tapestry, glinting softly in the light of memory.

And perhaps most of all, our legacy lives in the way we've loved with intention. We've chosen to honour each other not just in public, but in private. In the way Gina speaks my name with reverence. In the way I've tried to protect her peace, support her dreams, and celebrate her voice. We've built a life that is both sanctuary and stage—a place where love is not just felt, but performed with grace, humility, and joy.

As we continue this journey, we know that legacy is not a destination—it's a rhythm. It's the way we walk through the world. And if our rhythm has inspired others to love more deeply, to forgive more freely, to celebrate more fully—then we've done what we were meant to do. We've lived a life that matters. And that, more than anything, is the legacy we hope to leave.

As we continue to walk this path, hand in hand, we know that our legacy is not finished. It's still unfolding—in the rituals we create, in the love we share, in the stories we tell. It lives in every grandchild's smile, in every friend's embrace, in every quiet moment where we choose love over fear, connection over isolation. And when the time comes for others to speak of us, we hope they'll say not just that we lived, but that we loved. That we gave. That we made the world, in our own small way, more beautiful.✍



A small, happy team of four—
Tim and Pat, with their radiant daughters Mia and Olivia—shine like a constellation stitched together by love. In their laughter and togetherness, they form a mighty harmony, proof that the simplest math—two plus two—can equal everything. Rooted in devotion and blooming with joy, this little family moves through life as one rhythm, each heart a beat in the song of home.
Their bond is quiet strength, their presence a celebration of everyday grace.

Chapter Ten

The Reunion…

August, 2003

When I left Mauritius in 1967, it was on a one-way ticket to South Wales. As I said goodbye to my mother and two brothers, I carried the quiet ache of uncertainty—never imagining I would see them again.

But destiny had other plans. Ten years later, I was reunited with them in Mauritius—a moment stitched with joy and disbelief.

For years after, I dreamed of welcoming them into my home in the UK. I longed for the day my mother, Marday, and Kisna would cross the threshold, bringing with them the warmth of shared memory and the scent of home.

Did they ever come?

CHAPTER 10- THE REUNION

God has a reason for allowing things to happen... we may never understand His wisdom, but we simply have to trust His will.

A Passage to Europe

It was not all about my family and me visiting other countries. For years, whilst I was growing up, my mother and two brothers did whatever they could for me. My wife and I felt that it would be a good idea for us to extend an invitation to them to come and spend a period of time with us. My mother came first, followed by my brother Marday and his wife Manie, then by my brother Kisna and his wife Peddy. ✍

The Arrival of my mother

In April 1985, my mother visited my family and me. This was her first and only trip to England. It was a long-awaited visit, since I had left Mauritius—18 years ago. Something she had yearned for, for years. Finally, her dream came true. Having my mother grace my house with her presence was quite a momentous occasion. It was a real dream come true for me. I'd never thought I would have the pleasure of playing host to my mother. It took her a while to believe she was actually in my house in England. Eighteen long years had passed since I'd left her behind in Mauritius. She did not say much but I felt she was delighted with what she saw and could rest her mind that I was fine and there was nothing for her to worry.

My mother looked terrific and appeared overjoyed to be amongst us and so were we. It was after all her maiden visit. All I wanted to do was to spoil her rotten. April was a good period. The weather was kind. It was time to eat. I wanted to give her the most exotic foods she had ever eaten, but alas all she wanted was her

▲Here I am next to my beautiful mother in my lounge in Bradbourne lane, Larkfield, Kent.

From Left to Right

David,Gina, Navamah, Maurice, Syd

my youngest son, Maurice, sitting on my mother's lap.

That was the first time my mum saw her grandson.

boiled rice and lentil soup or a fried egg and a piece of bread. She told me she did not have much of an appetite. Little did I know at the time (neither did she), she was developing stomach cancer. Although she did not speak a word of English, she was resourceful enough to use non-verbal techniques to communicate her love and interest in my children. My daughter Patricia would sit near my mum holding her hand. They would look at each other and smile. As I sat watching them, both my mum and daughter would now and then ask me to translate a sentence or two they wanted to say to each other.

I was amazed at her ability to cope with the language barrier and her new surroundings. She was pleased with my lifestyle.

fortunately, whatever I did, she did not feel at home. But, I was determined that she would have a memorable stay in England. My cousin Rajen Vencatachellum offered to have her company for a few days. To my surprise, she felt so at home at his place that she ended up spending most of her time with them. As long as my mother was having a good time, I didn't mind. Indeed, my cousin went out of his way to make her visit to England a time she would never forget. He treated my mother like he would have treated his mum. He took her to France to see our rela-

Proud to be sitting next to my mother. My son Maurice looking sheepish!

My mum having a meal with her two grandchildren Patricia and David
Below we are in front of Rajen Vencatachellum house at Seven Sisters, London.

From left to right: (Back row): Syd, Gina, Rajen, Devi, Rodney, Ruby.
(Front row): David, Patricia, Navamah, and Maurice.

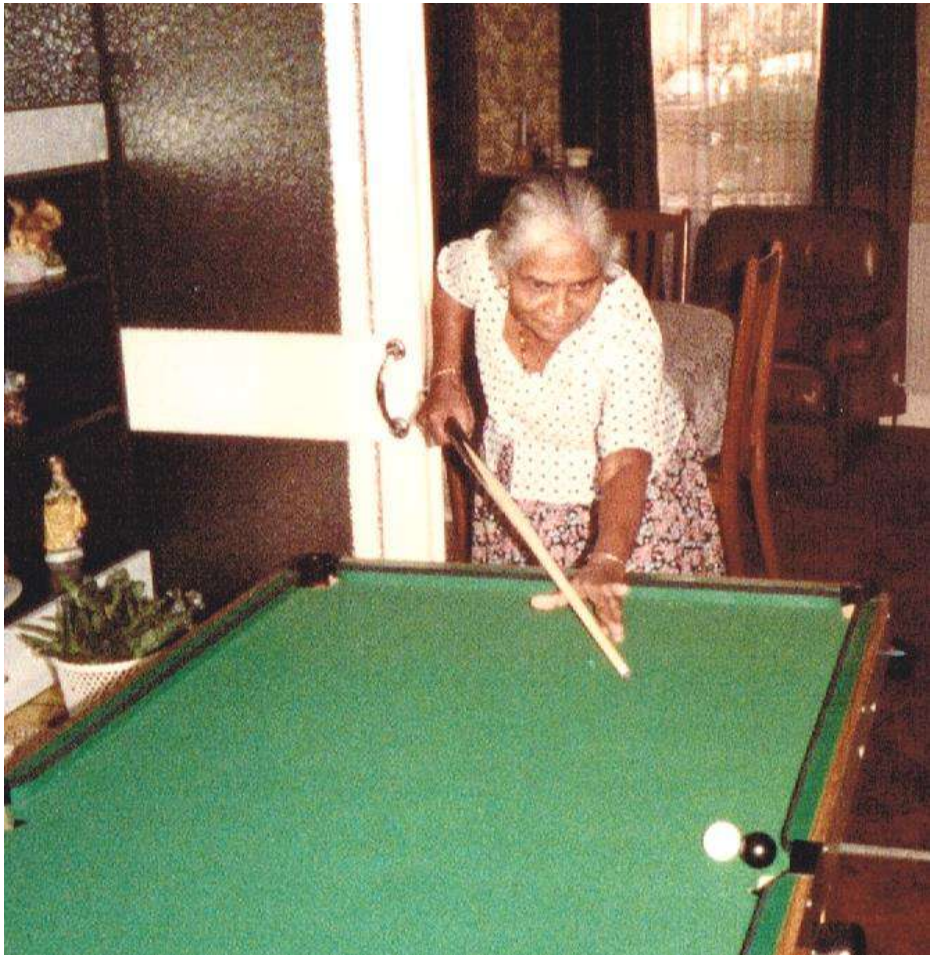
First Arrival: Victoria Station, 1985

April 1985 — Victoria Train Station pulsed with the rhythm of London life, but for me, it was the stage of something far more intimate. I stood waiting, heart full, as my mum arrived in London for the very first time. Her eyes held a mix of nerves and wonder, mirroring my own. We embraced in the crowd, two generations meeting in a new world, both changed by the moment. That day marked more than a visit — it was the beginning of a shared chapter, written in the language of courage, love, and quiet awe.

▲ *April 1985.*

My mum sitting in the dinning room at Rajen Vencatachellum's house.

On her left is: my wife Gina and on her right is Devi Vencatachellum with Syd sitting at her right.



▲ April 1985.
My mum chalks up courage and curiosity at Rajen Vencatachellum's snooker table, cue in hand, laughter in the air. A quiet game, a bold beginning.

Here is my mum in Paris, looking quite sexy with her sunglasses standing at the feet of the Eiffel Tower. The gentleman on her right is no other than my cousin Vel Vencatachellum, whom my mother had not seen for over 50 years. A true gentleman and a scholar.

April 1985

tions she had not met for years and some nice places too. ✍

The birthday anniversary

Born on 25th June 1909 my mother lived for 81 years, almost half of it as a widow. Bringing three young children alone could not have been easy. Nevertheless, she did it with admiration. Here she is below with my two brothers at her side, celebrating her 60th birthday. An occasion I missed with great regret. To mark the occasion several pictures were taken and as a small consolation, I was sent a few of them shown here. Following that birthday, she lived for two decades more before surrendering to bowel cancer—a painful reminder that no one lives forever. We should always try to enjoy each other's company while we can. May she al-

Navamah Chellen, 60th Birthday Celebration

Mrs. Navamah (Anne-Marie) Chellen
Celebrating her 60th Birthday

Inscribed at the back of this photo is this message for me written by my brother Marday on her behalf:

"May you keep it as a memorable one while she wishes you a joyful Xmas and a happy new year 1970 and that the flicker of light lays upon you in succeeding in your final exam!"

My mum celebrating her 60th Birthday
- Looking as strong and radiant as ever -

On her right:

One of my two grandmothers, my eldest brother Marday and his wife Manie.

On her left:

My second brother Kisna and his wife Peddy holding her son, Devadassen (AKA Doraj).

***NOTE**: Syd and Gina appear in the picture as if time itself invited them into the frame—seamlessly composited, their presence woven into the fabric of the original image.*

On her 60th birthday, my mum stood radiant at the heart of a living constellation—her mother beside her, sisters close, sons and daughters-in-law beaming with pride, grandchildren giggling at her feet, and a joyful throng of nieces, nephews, and kin raising glasses in celebration. The room pulsed with laughter and legacy, each toast a thread in the tapestry of her life. She didn't just turn sixty—she was crowned by the love she had sown across generations, a matriarch in full bloom, surrounded by the very proof of her grace and grit. That day, devotion was poured as freely as the wine.

My mum
surrounded by her grand children and great grandchild at her 80th birthday celebration. She looks the perfect grandmother

From left to right
Back row:

Maligaye, Devegi and her daughter Valee, Prega, Dessiga, Doraj, Priscilla

Front row:
In the middle is my mum, on her right is Rubina and on her left is Nadia

ways rest in peace!✍

The final curtain

Finally, it was time for my mother to go back to Mauritius. Another goodbye! Another parting! My son Maurice and I visited my mum again in Mauritius in January 1991 when we heard she was dying of cancer. The doctor said her condition was incurable and that she only had weeks to live. With great reluctance, I agreed that she should not be told. I spent hours by her side, chatting about various things. It was hard to keep such a big secret from her. Knowing that was my last chance, I pampered her as much as I could. She told me how much she appreciated and enjoyed her visit to England. Weeks later, she passed away.

Resting In Peace
is my mum.

My brother Kisna adorning her grave with flowers,
watched by my wife
and
eldest son David.

NOW THAT MY MOTHER'S LIGHT HAS BEEN EXTINGUISHED, WE WHO SURVIVE CAN ONLY MOURN HER PASSING! SHE DID EVERYTHING SHE COULD TO ENRICH THE LIVES OF HER THREE SONS; FOR ME SHE WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED AS THE BEST MUM IN THE WORLD.

R.I.P. mum. ✍

A touch of happiness

If a man's home is his castle, then having my brother Marday and his wife in my castle in Kent in the year 1999, was a great joy, but a joy I had to wait 32 years for.

e occasion provided us both with the opportunity to muse over of young days, reaffirm our brotherhood and bring our two families closer. I think we succeeded in achieving all three objectives on that visit. ✍

A thing of beauty

What my sister-in-law could never have expected is that the garden chair she accidentally broke during her stay with us is now a showcase piece in our garden and a great talking point in my family. Every so often I will repaint it and position it where it is now on display (see picture below). ✍

During her visit, my sister-in-law, Manie, inadvertently broke a chair. And here is Gina, gazing at it. Rather than discard it, I chose to make it a feature in my garden—a gentle tribute to her. She couldn't have left me a more poignant gift. Each time my eyes fall upon it, I remember her with fondness.

From left to right:

Marday, Gina, Manie — basking in the warmth of family and garden light at Chamarel House. A cherished visit, a joyful pose, and a memory rooted in love.

Chamarel House.
My wife Gina stands in the kitchen, proudly sharing photos of a beloved corner of our garden with my brother Marday on her right and my sister-in-law Manie on her left.

A moment 32 years in the making — tender, ordinary, and unforgettable. The kind of memory that blooms slowly, then stays forever.

1999

A snapshot of pride and kinship.

From left to right:

Patricia beaming beside her beloved MR2, Manie visiting from abroad and soaking in the moment, and David standing tall between them. A fleeting scene in the UK, where family, style, and smiles met in perfect harmony.

My sister-in-law, Manie Chellen with my wife, Gina in the garden at Chamarel house as it was when she visited us in 1999.

August 1999

My brother Marday having a go at mowing the lawn at Chamarel house,
1 Ditton Place, Ditton, Kent, UK
As he did not want to be recognised drastic action had
to be taken!

August 1999

▶ My brother Marday in England, sitting proudly between my son David and daughter Patricia in Chamarel house.

Notice that his hair is no more white. Amazing what technology can do for you these days!

A tender photo taken during my sister-in-law's visit to the UK captures more than just faces — it holds the quiet joy of reunion, the warmth of shared history, and the gentle grace of time well spent. In that moment, laughter lingered in the air like a familiar melody, and the garden seemed to lean in, listening. It was a rare gathering, framed by love and softened by years apart, now etched into memory like a cherished verse in our family's unfolding story.

From left to right:

David—steady, thoughtful, quietly anchoring the moment. Peddy, all warmth and wit, his presence a gentle spark. Rubina, poised and graceful, with mischief flickering in her gaze. Gina, glowing at the centre, the thread that binds them all. Nadia, laughter poised to spill, joy dancing at the edges. Syd, pensive, his knowing smile a doorway to deeper stories. Kisna, calm and grounding, a quiet force of balance. Maurice, leaning and grinning, sealing the moment with glee. Not just a line-up of names, but a living chorus of memory—each one a note in the harmony of kinship, each face a chapter in the family's unfolding tale.

▲*From L to R:*
Back row:

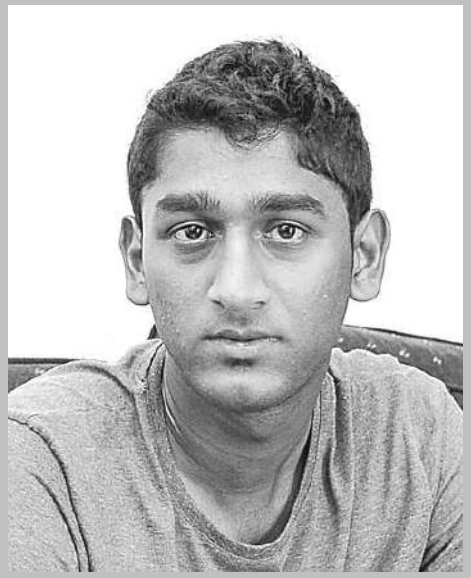
David,
Manie,
Mia,
Tricia,
Marday &
Olivia

In 2025, Dr. Devadassen Chellen made history at C-Care Darné in Mauritius by becoming the first Cardiologist in the country to perform a cardiac ablation procedure—an advanced treatment for heart rhythm disorders.

Brenda Teenesha Chellen

▲*From left to right:* *Mia, Tricia, Olivia and Prega*
▼*From left to right:* *David, Olivia, Tricia, Mia and Vicky*

Brandon Chellen



From L to R: David, Mia, Olivia Tricia

Near the Pamplemousses Botanical Garden, a path lined with bougainvillea and coconut trees leads to L'Aventure du Sucre, one of Mauritius' most spectacular attractions. Set in a former sugar factory. My two children's and two grand children's dived into a fun interactive journey through the island's history, closely tied to sugarcane, and discovered how it's transformed into sugar, rum, electricity, and natural fertilisers. And they sat on giant machines.

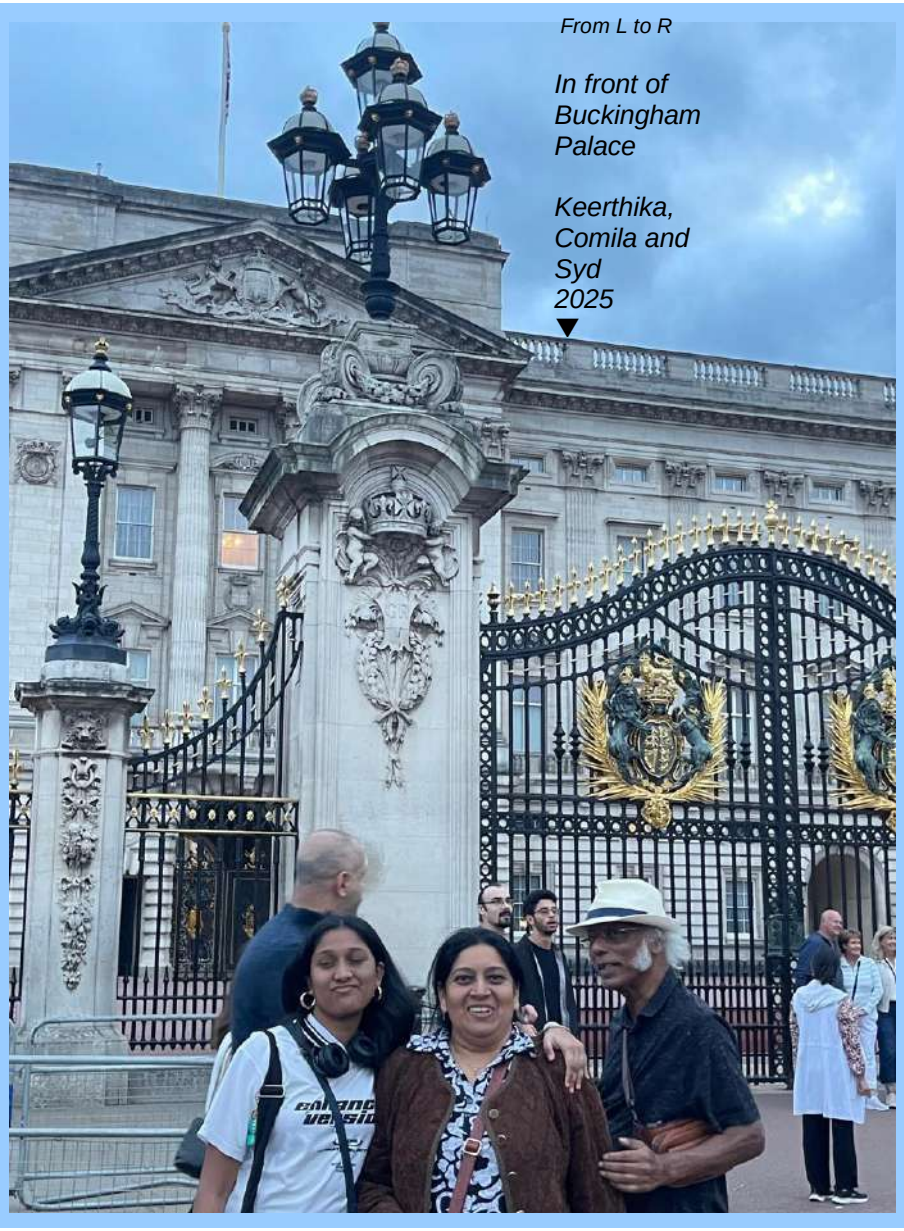
From left to right: Sanjivan, Olivia, Sharavanen, Sankara

Syd knocked on the door of Number 10 like he was late for tea with the Prime Minister — and fully prepared to renegotiate the biscuit policy.

Syd – London eye – 2025

— High above the city skyline, I rode the London Eye with quiet wonder. The world below spun in miniature, but the moment felt grand: a rare pause in time, where reflection met exhilaration. Framed by glass and sky, my gaze held both the weight of memory and the thrill of perspective. London stretched out beneath me, but it was the stillness within that made the view unforgettable.

Her e I am, shoulder to quill with William Shakespeare — not quite the Gloclose enough for a dreamer. You simply can't script a moment better than this.



From L to R

In front of Buckingham Palace

Keerthika, Comila and Syd
2025

19th August 2025 From L to R : Doraj, Keerthika, Comila, Syd

Doctor Chellen and his family arrived from Mauritius like a breeze of island sunshine, bringing laughter and love into our UK home. One radiant afternoon, we soared above the city on the London Eye—its slow, graceful spin mirroring the gentle rhythm of reunion. From that lofty perch, the Thames shimmered below and Big Ben stood proud, but nothing outshone the smiles shared in our capsule. It was a day stitched with delight, a memory to tuck into the heart's pocket.

In the soft light of our conservatory, 1999 offered a moment we'd waited years to capture — my brother Marday and his wife Manee, radiant during their maiden visit to the UK, standing alongside Patricia, myself, and David.

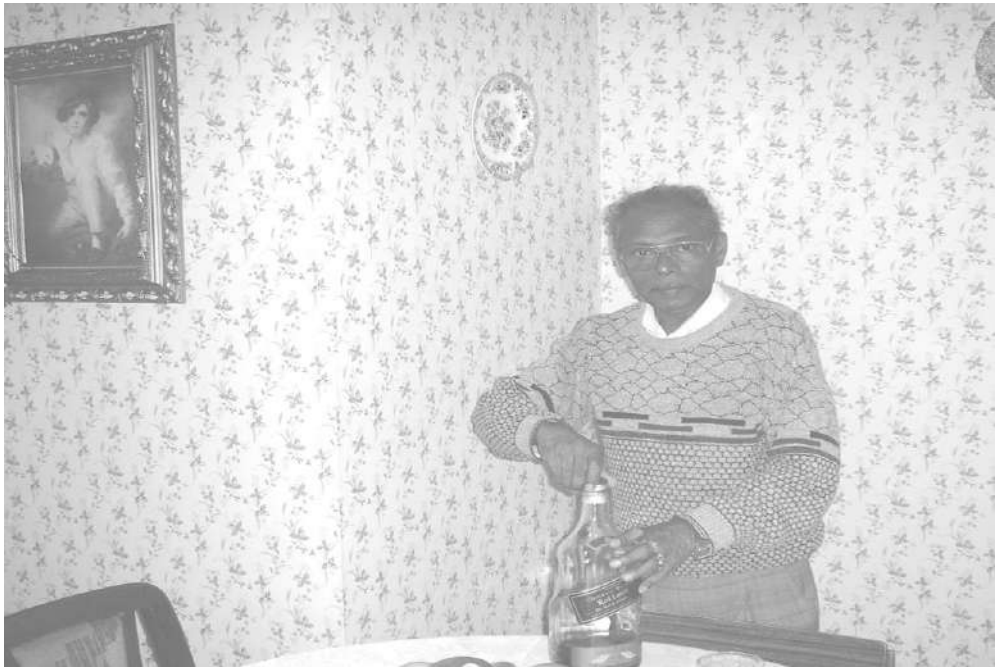
From left to right: Marday, Patricia, Gina, Manee, and David — each face reflecting joy, reunion, and the quiet magic of family rediscovered. That photo shoot wasn't just a snapshot; it was a celebration of presence after absence, a memory stitched into the fabric of our home at Chamarel House, where laughter echoed and time briefly stood still

2025- Syd in London with Doraj, his wife Comila, their daughter Keerthika— a lively quartet weaving through the city's rhythm. From riverside strolls to shared laughter, it was a day stitched with joy, discovery, and the kind of togetherness that lingers long after the sun sets.

Then came Kisna…

August 5th, 2002 marked another memorable day in my life. My brother Kisna and his wife Peddy visited us after 35 years of separation. It was their first visit to England. They stayed with us for 696 hours. Some of these hours we spent together visiting places and relatives in Paris, France. As it tends to be at such reunions, we talked about everything we felt appropriate. There were tears of joy and sadness. He has been a good brother to me. Indeed without his financial backing, I may never have left Mauritius! He is by nature a quiet man, except when he has

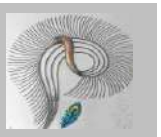
August 5th, 2002
At the table from L to R My brother Kisna, my son David, my wife Gina, my sister-in-law Peddy, and my son Maurice.



Kisna and the Bottle: A Ritual Uncorked

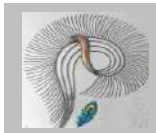
Whisky may as well have been invented for my brother Kisna — though someone forgot to mention the word moderation. Here he is, standing proudly in my old kitchen, opening a fresh bottle like it's a long-lost friend. A moment of mischief, warmth, and unmistakable Kisna charm.

"Some bottles hold whisky, but Kisna uncorks stories — bold, messy, and always poured with love."



Kisna mowing the lawn with David

A rare and tender slice of everyday joy — Kisna mowing the lawn with David during his visit to the UK. Two generations, side by side in quiet rhythm, turning a simple chore into a moment of connection. The kind of memory that lingers like the scent of freshly cut grass.



"It was a quiet morning in Kent when my brother first laid his hands on the mower—an unassuming machine that hummed with purpose. The lawn, damp with dew and dappled in sunlight, stretched before him like a canvas waiting for order. With each pass, the scent of freshly cut grass rising like a hymn to summer. There was something oddly meditative in the rhythm, a foreign yet familiar satisfaction in taming nature's excess. By the time he reached the final pass, he stood back, proud and amused, a visitor turned gardener in a land of hedgerows and tea."

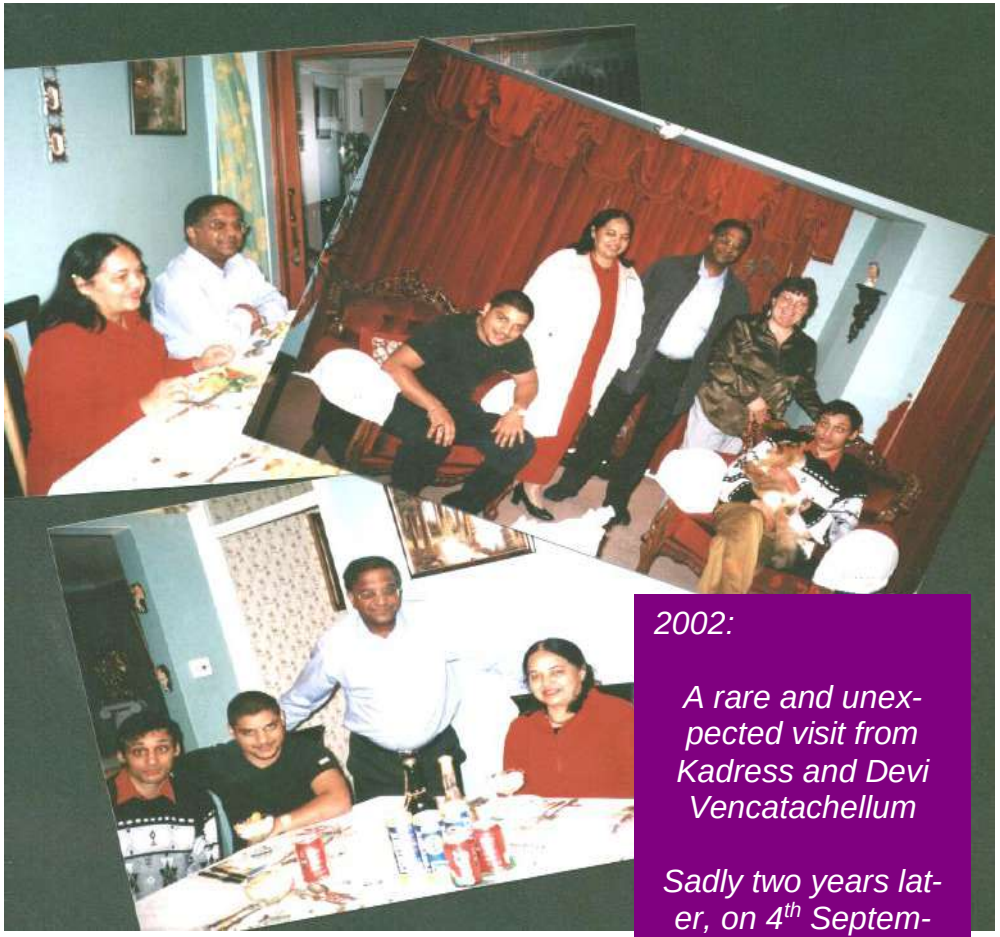
had a few! Having him in our midst was another dream come true. I got to taste some of Peddy's Mauritian cuisine. Oh! La! La! And Gina responded with her favourite Maltese piece to resistance: Rabbit Stew and Spaghetti. ✍

Encounter with one of the four musketeers

In 1975, Beatrice and Indrassen Vencatachellum from Paris visited us at 18 St George's Square, Maidstone. Kent. Photographs were taken in the grounds of

A rare and treasured visit to the UK — Indrassen stands between Beatrice on his right and my wife Gina on his left, sharing smiles and stories in a moment that felt both familiar and long-awaited. A quiet reunion, rich with warmth and grace.

Beatrice with Gina — two women whose grace and warmth lit the room. Beside them: Indrassen, Beatrice, and Syd, gathered in rare alignment. It was more than a visit — it was a moment suspended in time, where laughter softened the years and presence became its own kind of poetry. A fleeting constellation, now stitched into the fabric of memory.



2002:

A rare and unexpected visit from Kadress and Devi Vencatachellum

Sadly two years later, on 4th September, 2004 Kadress passed away.

Canterbury Cathedral.

Indrassen and I spent quite a bit of time together whilst we were in Mauritius. We were two of a gang of four musketeers. The other two were Rajoo Ramana and Indren Cuttaree.

Back in the 1970s, my cousin Vicky Chellen-Duval surprised me with a visit to our house at 18 St George's Square. It was the kind of knock at the door that echoes through time—a gentle tap, followed by laughter, stories, and the warmth of reunion.

Our home then was modest but full of character: lace curtains fluttering with every breeze off the near-by park, the murmur of town life outside, and the comforting clutter of family photos and books within.

From left to right:

Aile, his wife Vicky (née Chellen), and my son Maurice beside me — gathered in the heart of Mauritius, where laughter echoed through Vicky's lounge and time paused just long enough to frame this moment in memory.

Vicky's arrival felt like a gift—a reminder that family has its own quiet way of finding you.

Since retiring, I've returned to Mauritius each year, and she's always been part of that journey. We carve out time—unhurried afternoons at the Bois Chéri tea factory, cups of tea sweetened with cow's milk, and conversations that slip between memory and meaning.

She tells me she's proud of my books and wants me to be known in Mauritius. There's a light in her eyes when she speaks about my novels, as if she sees not just the stories but the spirit behind them.

She cradles my pages like palm leaves, tender, opening to the light—
each line a hushed benediction for the boy I was,
and the man I've grown to be.

Vicky is the daughter of my uncle Candasamy, but more than that, she's a keeper of shared history—a bridge between continents, generations, and the tender geography of belonging.

My first return after ten years away was more than a journey—it was a homecoming, stitched with tears, laughter, and the quiet rediscovery of love long held at a distance. Each embrace rekindled a memory; each face, a chapter waiting to be reread. Subsequent visits deepened that experience, layering joy upon joy, and sorrow upon reflection. In the wake of those moments, I felt compelled to write—not merely to remember, but to honour. What follows are verses dedicated to each soul who met me at the threshold of reunion: my mother, my brothers, my nieces and nephews, my cherished relatives, and the few dear friends who remain. These poems are offerings—woven from gratitude, shaped by time, and illuminated by the joy of finding one another again.✍

Food for thoughts

*Carefully watch your **thoughts**, for they become your words.*
*Manage and watch your **words**, for they will become your actions.*
*Consider and judge your **actions**, for they have become your habits.*
*Acknowledge and watch your **habits**, for they shall become your values.*
*Understand and embrace your **values**, for they become your destiny.*

Mahatma Gandhi.

Photo taken during a visit to her home in Mauritius. *From left to right:* *Goin, Vicky's adopted son, pictured with my son Maurice. In a beautiful twist of fate, they formed a genuine friendship during that visit—one that blossomed quickly but, sadly, never had the chance to continue. A fleeting moment of connection, fondly remembered.*

▲*From L to R:* *Kisna, Peddy, Gina, David*

▼*2025-* *From L to R:* *Vicky, Maurice, David, Syd*

Side by Side in London, 2025

In the heart of London, 2025 offered a quiet moment of connection as Syd and Doraj stood side by side — two kindred spirits reunited in a city that had witnessed so many chapters of our family's story. Their presence together felt both familiar and rare, like a melody remembered after years apart. The photo captured more than posture and smiles; it held the grace of shared history, the comfort of belonging, and the quiet joy of a visit that stitched another thread into our tapestry of memory.

In the summer of 2025, my wife and I welcomed my nephew's wife Comila and her bright-eyed daughter Keerthika to our home in the UK—a visit stitched with warmth, laughter, and quiet joy.

Here is my friend Prega Valaydon escorting my children and grand children on the island of Mauritius.

From L to R

Olivia,
Tricia,
Mia,
Prega,
David.

Dedicated with love to Prega Valaydon, my rare gem:

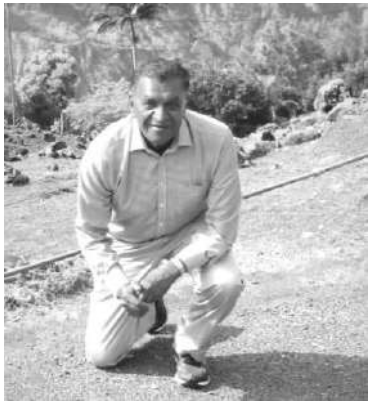
YOU

You are a true friend,
You always lend a hand.
You listen and you care,
You are loyal and fair.

You are a blessing in my life,
You inspire me to overcome strife.
You are loyal, honest and sincere,
You are the best friend I hold dear.

You are a rare gem to find,
You are generous, kind and refined.
You are a shining star,
You are my friend, no matter how far.

Dedicated to Sandragassen, with Good Cheer



Sandragassen Rungasawmi
Born: 16/08/1994

Debates by the Breeze

You argue like the sea debates the shore,
Restless, wise, and wanting more.
At every meal, your thoughts take flight—
A banquet served with wit and bite.

I meet your fire with friendly grin,
Stir the pot, then lean right in.
For in your storm, there lives a charm,
A mind that keeps the heart from harm.

And though our talks may twist and bend,
You've grown from Prega's friend to friend.
Mauritius hums when we unite—
In *Maison Chamarel* and shared delight.

So keep the questions sharp and grand,
I'll always lend a playful hand.
For through the years, this bond's design
Is stitched with laughter—yours and mine.

Till next time—by sea, by screen,
Let's argue where the heart stays keen.
Long may we meet in talk and tease,
In laughter's shade and island breeze.

Dedicated to my
Second Tamil Scout friend,
Vedpragassun Chinasamy
(AKA Vedon)

The Scout Who Stayed

Old friend, like tide upon the shore,
You greet me with news and truth once more.
Among lost voices, you remain—
A steady flame in memory's lane.

We meet where salt and laughter blend,
Each visit, a page we gently mend.
Mauritius sings in you and me—
In seaside talks and reverie.

So let this verse be yours to keep,
A token from my heart, bone-deep.
For in your presence, time feels kind,
And friendship leaves no soul behind.

Dedicated to
Soondress Ramasawmy, My Shield

Here I proudly stand with Soondress who has been my rock, my protector and my helper.

A Shield in the Sunlight

When storms disguised as kindness came
In overalls and sharpened schemes,
You saw through smiles that sought to claim
More than my trust, more than my means.

You stepped between their polished pitch
And me—a target, soft and sure.
No fanfare. Just your quiet switch
From friend to fierce protector's cure.

Mauritius, where the trade winds sing,
Becomes our table, shade, and grace.
A meal, a laugh, the anchoring
Of loyalty time can't erase.

How do I weigh what you have done—
Your voice when mine felt just too small?
I owe no gold, no debt that's won,
Only my thanks, my grateful call.

Soondress, you stood. You still remain.
A shield, a soul, without demand.
For every rescue, every refrain,
I raise my pen, I shake your hand.

The Beat of Our Bond

(For Devadassen, with all my love)

Born:
21.06.1969

You were born when I was gone—
A name I hadn't whispered on,
A heartbeat pulsing in the mist
Of all I missed... of all I missed.

And yet, across the tides of years,
We found each other—not in blood, but tears,
In welcome, kindness, grace distilled—
We held what time itself had stilled.

Moscow glimmered, distant, cold.
I helped you then—a tale retold
In quiet acts, in care repaid,
In every visit home I made.

You check my heart, but truth be told,
You've healed it more than you'd behold.
No stethoscope could ever hear
The joy you bring when you draw near.

So this I write, in verse, not chart:
You are the rhythm in my heart.
Not for the science, not the skill—
But for your love, so deep, so still.

1943-2025 1941-2014

A tribute to my brother Kisna and his wife, **Peddy**

Wings Woven in Grace

Kisna, bold as island breeze,
Peddy, gentle, meant to please—
Together they became the light
That launched my dream into its flight.

They saw beyond the village shore,
To hopes I hadn't voiced before.
They gave their savings, gave their time,
Their love the reason for my climb.

No debt of coin, no gift of gold,
Could match the story they helped unfold.
That ticket bought with silent grace
Carried me far—yet holds their face.

Mauritius stayed within my soul,
But they ensured I reached my goal.
Though buried now beneath the sod,
They walk beside me, kissed by God.

Each word I write, each stage I see,
Is wrapped in what they gave to me.
So Kisna, Peddy—know you're near,
Your names, my whisper, year by year.

The fare they paid still gives me flight—
Two hearts who turned my dark to light.
And gratitude, like dawn anew,
Blooms ever bright because of you.

In honour of my cherished brother, Marday and his wife, Manie

The Lamp Before My Voyage

In the hush of youth, where roots entwine,
Before I crossed the ocean's line,
Two hearts held mine with quiet grace—
Marday and Manie, my starting place.

Manie, soft touch in morning's light,
A meal, a word, a prayer said right.
You stitched warmth into every day,
A gentle guide when skies turned grey.

And Marday—oh, my brother true,
Who shaped my soul with all he knew.
You taught me how to walk with care,
To honour truth, be just, be fair.

With books and will, you paved my lane,
Endowed me with a scholar's name.
You didn't speak in lofty phrase,
But lived your values in small ways.

Each lesson, each encouraging word,
Still echoes in the path I've heard.
I left for Wales, brave and new,
But took your virtues, packed in view.

I wear your love like second skin—
A compass stitched forever in.
So here, through lines that vow to last,
I thank you both for holding fast.

Your grace, your steadiness, your care,
Are stars that lit my passage there.
And in each dawn I now embrace,
Your lamp still burns—a guiding grace.

Dedicated to all my nephews and grrand nephews ; nieces and grand nieces (21 of them at the time of writing).

(From the One Who Left, But Never Lost)

Blood Without Borders

I walked away in sixty-seven,
With island salt still in my skin.
The world pulled wide, but not apart—
You're stitched inside my silent heart.

You bloomed while I was far from view,
Yet still I carry dreams of you.
Not by face or photo shared,
But through the love our elders spared.

I've watched you rise, unseen, unheard,
But felt each heartbeat, like a word.
Still—I am yours, and you are mine,
Bound not by touch, but thread and time.

If ever you should say my name,
Let it be gently, not with shame.
I lived, I wrote, I held the thread—
A living echo of the dead.

Dedicated with eternal gratitude to my parents: **Navamah and Armon Chellen**

Your Memory Still Lingers

You were the roots that held me fast,
The hush of dawn, the song that lasts.
In quiet strength and gentle tone,
You taught me how to walk alone.

You stitched my childhood seam by seam,
With lullabies and island dreams.
You bore the weight with steady hands,
The grace of seashells on warm sands.

Your eyes held stories, fierce and bright—
Of struggle, joy, and earned delight.
And though your voices now are still,
I hear you in the whippoorwill.

In every word I write and speak,
It's your devotion that I seek.
You shaped my soul, you lit my way,
Your love the script I still replay.

Though time has claimed your earthly form,
Your spirits rise in sun and storm.
And in my granddaughters' laughter bold,
Your warmth returns, your hearts unfold.

So let this poem be my vow—
To honour all you gave, and how.
Forever etched in verse and prayer,
My parents true, beyond compare.

Chapter Eleven

The Chamarel House…

When I first noticed the property, it was beyond my reach. Yet every morning, on my way to work, I would pass by the house—drawn to it, admiring it, quietly longing for it. It felt like more than just bricks and mortar; it stirred something in me.

Then, in 1997, Gina and I made the decision to buy it. She named it Chamarel, a tribute to the seven-coloured earth of Mauritius—a place of wonder and memory. The name felt right, grounding our home in beauty, heritage, and hope..

CHAPTER 11 – THE CHAMAREL HOUSE

A man's home is his castle. 'You can tell a lot about him by the way he keeps it and a home like that without a cat is just a house.

The road to Chamarel House

The road to Chamarel house had been an arduous one, but in the end the pains we went through were worthwhile, bearing in mind that when Gina and I got married in 1970 we rented our first home at 9B Rose Hill Terrace in Swansea, South of Wales, which she hated but had to grin and bear.

It was a two-bedroom flat in a four-storey building. On the ground floor lived a married couple and they were also the caretakers. On the top floor lived a single Nigerian man, whom Gina would describe as scary, whilst we had the third floor, containing two rooms and a kitchen. The kitchen was reasonably big and contained two cookers and a sink. The cookers were so mucky that no one with any sense of hygiene would have been happy to use it to cook a meal. The second floor contained the bathroom and a toilet which we had to share with the other tenants. The carpet in the both bedrooms was so tatty, we had to replace it with our own money as Mrs Morgan, who was the landlady, felt it was good enough and therefore did not want to give us a new one. Gina hated the situation, particularly having to share the bathroom and toilet, but nevertheless she did her best to cope and did so extremely well. Full marks to Gina who was determined to turn the flat into a place fit for any decent human being to live in. She gave the place a good scrub and made it as cosy as she could.

Sometimes Gina had to stay alone whilst I went on night duty. She used to be petrified and would call me on the ward to chat to help her sleep. I don't think she would ever forget the night when she encountered a situation that scared her out of her wit.

I was on night duty when I received a telephone call from Gina and she sounded distressed, complaining that the tenant on the top floor had been knocking at her bedroom door asking to borrow matches to which she had responded she had none without opening the door. She became frightened, when the man tried to push on the door in an attempt to force it open, feeling sure he was trying to gain entry to attack her. After advising her to keep her door close, I rushed home. The next day, we reported the man to the landlady.

This incidence obviously unsettled Gina to the point that we decided to move.

9B Rose Hill Terrace, Swansea, South Wales

The House That Held Our Hunger

9B Rose Hill Terrace was our first nest — cramped, cold, and far from the dream, yet it held the echo of our vows and the stubborn hope that love could outgrow walls. I never said it aloud, but I hated that house: the peeling paint, the damp corners, the way it felt like someone else's life. Still, it was ours. I worked night and day, driven by a quiet promise to Gina and to myself — that one day, we'd trade struggle for sanctuary. That little terrace in Swansea became the starting line, not the finish, and every hour I labored was a brick laid toward the life we were building.

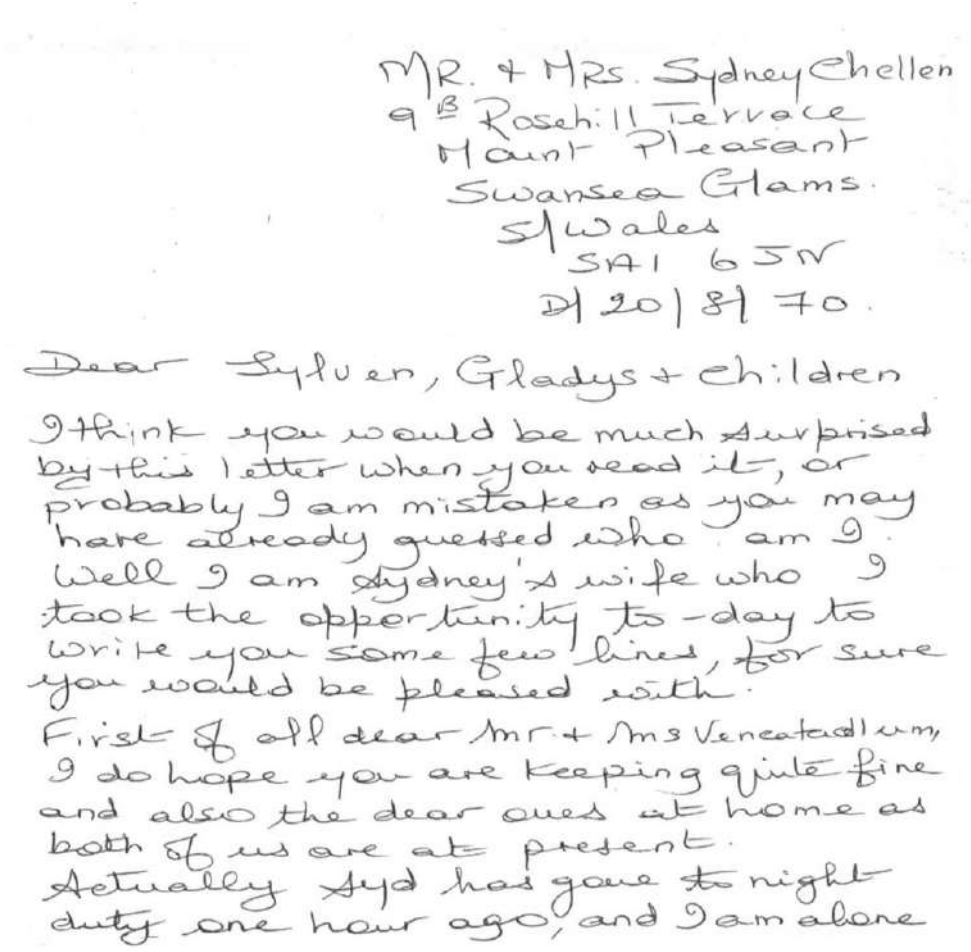
This is a letter that Gina wrote to my cousin Siven Vencatachellum on 20th August 1970, five days after she arrived in Wales.

This letter was returned to us by my cousin Vel Vencatachellum on 5th December 2006.

He found it while cleaning the loft. He said 'it must be interesting for Gina to remember the hard life and a memorable letter.'

Fortunately, three months later we moved to Kent, England into a two-bedroom flat in the Nurses' Quarter, provided to us by Oakwood Hospital where I was working. That was a good move. In fact too good to be true because no sooner had we settled down than we found ourselves facing an eviction order.

By then we were beginning to get tired of this gipsy-style of life. It was time to look for a better place we could call our own. We visited several Estate Agents and enlisted their help. After a thorough search, we found a small two-bedroom, years-old terrace house located in a cul-de-sac at 18, Saint George's Square, in Maidstone going for £4000. In 1970 that was a huge amount and we did not have that kind of money. My father-in-law lent us £500 to put as a down payment and we borrowed the remainder from a building society. We were given twenty-five years to pay back the money at a rate of £25 per month which included the interest. The house needed some attention like a full-damp course treatment, rewiring and decorating. Although it needed a bit of loving care it was our house. Until that point I had no DIY skills. I knew nothing about painting or decorating. With the help of a good Samaritan I learnt


Mr. & Mrs. Sydney Chellen
9 B Rosehill Terrace
Mount Pleasant
Swansea Glams.
S/Wales
SA1 6JW
D/20/8/70.

Dear Sylven, Gladys + children

I think you would be much surprised by this letter when you read it, or probably I am mistaken as you may have already guessed who am I. Well I am Sydney's wife who I took the opportunity to-day to write you some few lines, for sure you would be pleased with.

First of all dear Mr + Mrs Vencatachellum, I do hope you are keeping quite fine and also the dear ones at home as both of us are at present.

Actually Syd has gone to night duty one hour ago, and I am alone

"We didn't build Chamarel House in bricks alone—we built it scrubbed floor, every sleepless night, every move made with hope. Gina turned hardship into home, and I turned fear into res road was long, but love walked it with us, step by stubborn step."

now writing some letters which I do have to answer. I do feel a bit afraid to stay alone during the night, but I have to pluck up courage now. Syd is going to buy a T.V. and also we have the telephone so that when I want I phone him to hospital.

Dear Mr. + Mrs Venceat a chellum, by the way thank you very much for the lovely card you sent us. It was indeed nice of you both. I do hope you will pay us a visit one day in Swansea, as both of us hope that soon we shall see you. Probably as soon as Syd gets his next holidays which is due on the 6th Dec.

Syd is very happy now, and he is really a very kind and sweet gentleman. Anyhow life with him is very beautiful.

On the 8th August we got married and we had a nice quiet and peaceful wedding. We also had some snaps

and made a wedding album. Now I have ordered some to be duplicated and we shall send you one of ours when we receive them from Malta. I also have to send some to Mauritius, because I'm sure my beloved mother-in-law would love to see them.

As you may know, we arrived to Wales on the 15th August at 6.00pm and the weather was terrible, not like Malta it is very beautiful. — Also I have found a great difference from Malta to Wales, especially for life which is quite expensive. Also certain vegetables you don't find them here.

Now probably you want to have a description of our flat. Well Syd has rented a flat which we pay £5-10s weekly including electricity and water. I have a quite easy sitting room, a fireplace and two large windows, a small table and a cupboard

4.

where I can store all my clothes and Syds. Then I have the bedroom which is sufficient for us up to now, a fire place and a large window and a big cupboard. The Kitchen is a bit small, but in it I have a sink, two cookers, a dresser and a table, and also a cupboard where I can store my food stuffs. The Bathroom we share it with the one down to us, but nearly most of the day it is empty.

Anyhow I think I have to terminate here but before I leave you, your dear wife and also the dear ones, me and Syd wishes you the best of luck and true happiness

May God Almighty Bless you and your family.

Cheerio

Hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully

MR. & MRS Syd Chellen

Here I am relaxing in the lounge in our first house at 18 St. Georges Square, Maidstone. Kent

18 St Georges Square Maidstone Kent.

fast. Soon I was wall-papering, fixing vinyl and laying carpet on the floors, tiling the ceilings and bathroom walls, painting the doors and windows and even plastering the cellar walls. We had to make significant changes to make it habitable, my wife took great pride in turning it into a little palace. Be it a poor man's castle, it was ours. No more sharing facilities with others. We at last had our privacy restored and we were on the first run of the property ladder.

Since we were starting from scratch, we needed all the basic necessities such as a bed, dining table and chairs, s cooker, a fridge, a heater, a couple of pots and pans, a couple of plates, a pair of knives and forks and two mugs. Having made our shopping list we visited two large shopping stores: "Woodhouse and Currys" they were willing to give us the items we needed on credit. We agreed to pay back the loan in three years.

Because it was an old house it was not well insulated. The one heater we had was not enough to heat the all house. Most of the heat was escaping underneath the doors. We could hear the wind whistling. The house was so cold we would go to bed early and cuddled up to each other under layers of blankets. In the morning I had to get up early to get ready for work. The bathroom was freezing cold. One could see the condensation running down the wall. Somehow, we survived.✍

2 Bradbourne Lane

To build on what we had achieved, just after Maurice was born in 1979, we decided to sell and with the money we got we were able to pay back what we owed and we used the remainder (and borrowed some more) to purchase No. 2, Bradbourne Lane - a three-bedroom semi-detached house. Which was going for £25000. It was a new house much better and nicer property. The insulation was great and it was a delight to live in. the room was quite big and we had a decent garden. By then I had acquired some skills in ploughing, laying bricks and paving. I began to put those skills to work and sorted the garden. I created a patio so that we could sit outside when the weather was good and also the children could play around on their bikes or with their toys. At the deep end of the garden, I fixed a swing. Whenever I had some thinking to do or felt in a reflective mood, I would

Patricia on the door-step of Bradbourne Lane,
Maidstone,
Kent

Pedals and Promises at Bradbourne Lane

A young Tricia, radiant with the carefree joy of childhood, sits poised on her bike in the back garden at Bradbourne Lane, her smile lifting into the breeze like bird-song at dawn. Beside her, a loyal friend mirrors her stillness, their bikes resting side by side—twin melodies awaiting motion on a sunlit afternoon. In their imaginations, the lane beyond, dappled with light and framed by hedgerows whispering the secrets of seasons past, transformed into a grand stage. Here, friendship was threaded into motion and memory, each imagined journey a stitch in their shared tapestry. In that fleeting moment, Tricia wasn't merely sitting on a bike; she was leaning into a story—one that would be retold with warmth, pride, and a smile that remembers everything.

go into the garden, sit on the swing and reminisce about the past or dream about the things I would like to achieve and how I could make those dreams come true.

One of my ambitions was to own three houses so that I could pass one to each of my children. Well, I nearly did make that dream come true.

I never wanted to sell 2 Bradbourne Lane, as it was such a nice property. But then something terrible happened and I suddenly all I wanted to do was to run away from it. I regrettably sold it and in the process lost several thousand of pounds.✍

1 Chamarel House

This is our current residence. When I first noticed it, it was a show house and I could not afford it. Every morning, on my way to work, I used to pass the house and I could not help admiring and desiring it. In 1997, Gina and I took a second closer look at it and bought it. It is a five-bedroom house, with three reception rooms, a large u-shaped kitchen, a utility room, a conservatory and a study/library. One of the bedrooms we have converted into an activity room. There is a fairly spacious garden at the back and front of the house. A double (tandem) garage with extra parking spaces at the back.

Since we bought it the front garden has been recovered with fresh lawn and bonding. The boundary wall has been replaced with bricks and an iron railing and an arched Iron Gate painted in black and gold. Two statues, one of Diana (Goddess of hunting) and the other of Apollo (God of music), guard the entrance gate. The road to this house has been a long but worthwhile one. It is our treasured little palace and this is where we plan to stay until it is time for us to leave

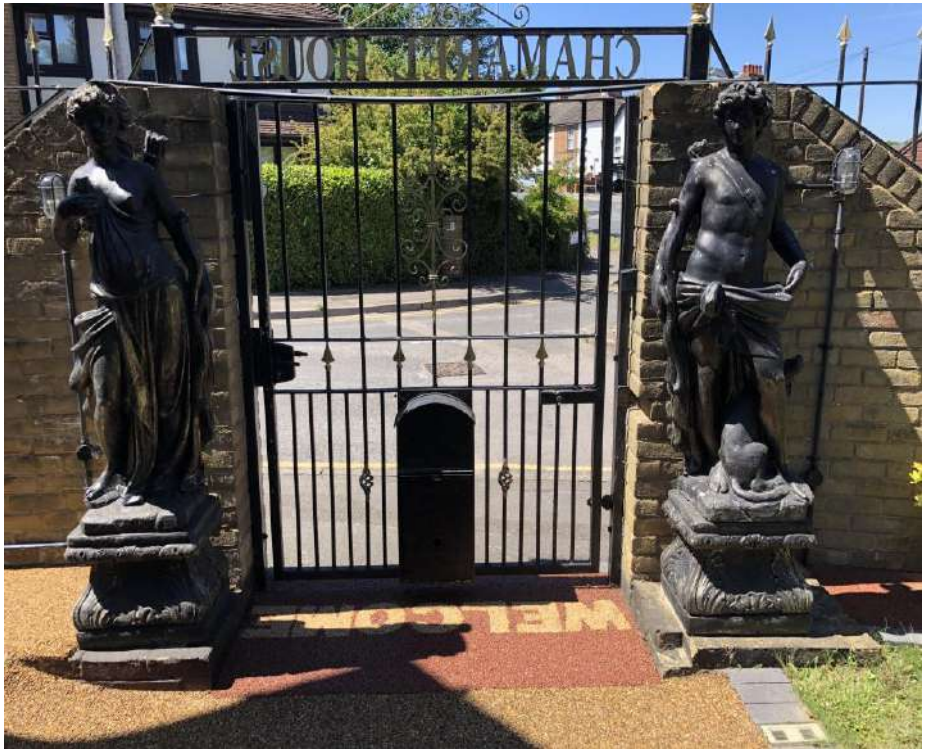
"Chamarel House was once a dream glimpsed from th roadside—now it is the heartbeat of our story, a sanctua shaped by love, perseverance, and vision. May its wal echo with laughter long after we've taken our final bow."

Chamarel house,
Ditton place,
Ditton,
Aylesford Kent.
UK.
ME20 6SX

Arial view of
Chamarel house by Google

From above, Chamarel House nestles into the lush folds of Kent, the garden of England, like a whispered secret—its rooftops kissed by sun, its garden paths winding like verses in Gina's memoir. The aerial view reveals a sanctuary cradled by other houses and sky, where nature and narrative intertwine. Each angle tells a story: the kitchen where love simmers, the conservatory where laughter lingers, the quiet corners where legacy is written in light. It's not just a house—it's a living tapestry, stitched with devotion and framed by the county's breathtaking beauty.

Outside, the world has hushed beneath a blanket of Christmas snow. The ground glistens with a soft, silvery stillness, each flake a quiet blessing. At the gate, the two statues- Apollo and Diana, stand sentinel—draped in winter's finery, their shoulders crowned with snow like ancient guardians dressed for a sacred ceremony. The air is crisp, the silence deep, and the scene feels touched by something timeless. In this moment, even stone seems to breathe with memory, as if the statues remember every Christmas past and welcome each one anew.



A view from the front garden
Two statues:
Diana and Apollo, the God and Goddess of hunting,
guarding the entrance.

A partial view of the front and back garden. On the top left-hand corner is the deity of love anlso Anthony and Cleopatra next to the Helsinki SPA

A view of the back garden. In the left-hand corner is a closer view of Zeus, the chief of the Greek pantheon.

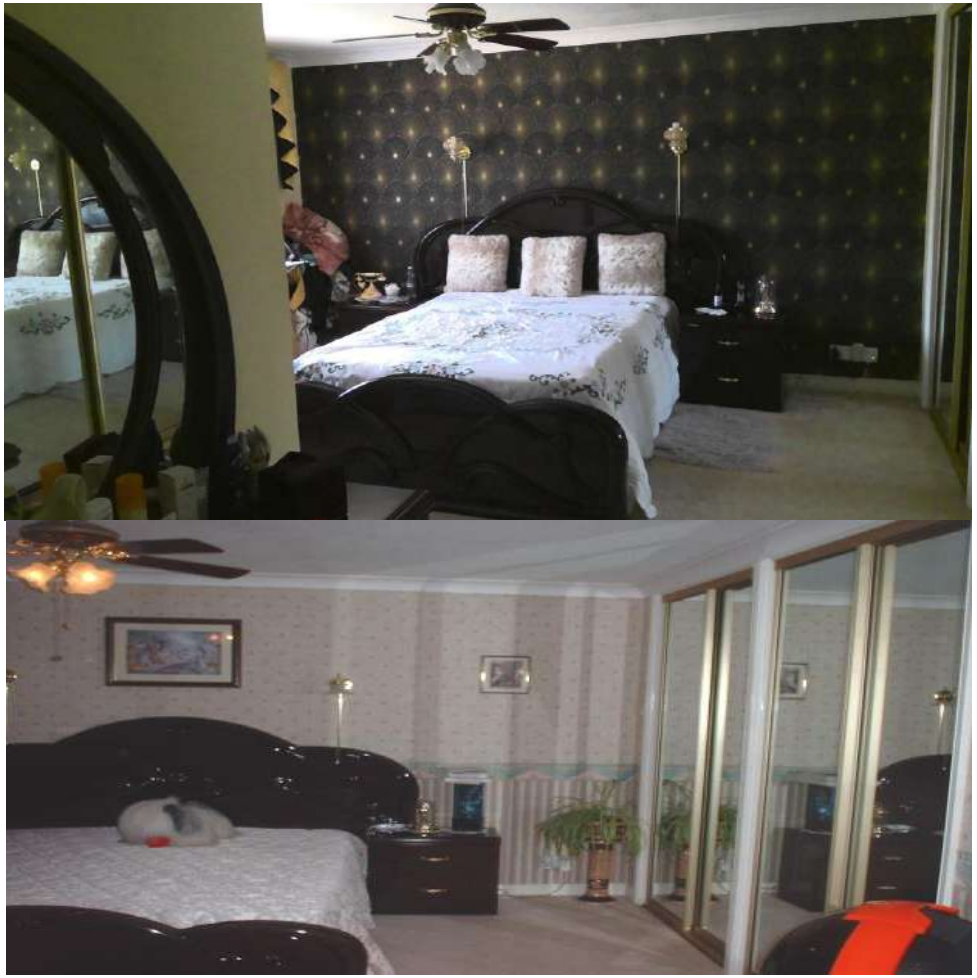
The right side entrance to the house

the stage and meet our creator. It is our wish that it stays in the Chellens' family when my wife and I are long gone. Obviously whoever inherits it will choose to honour our wish instead of following their own.

Three years ago we decided to add solar power which provides us with free electricity and hot water. There are sixteen solar panels attached to the roof with a guarantee of 20 years, although there is a good possibility that they would last for 30 years before there would be a need to replace them. The property is fenced all around and protected with an alarm system. At the time of writing it was estimated to be worth around half a million pounds and rising. ✍

The Master Bedchamber

The master bed-chamber, seen here, is one of the finest and largest rooms in the house. We redecorated it as soon as we moved in and fitted it with genuine Italian-style furniture and furnishings. The king-size bed is finished in rich rosewood. The four mirror doors guarding the fixed wardrobes make the room look very spacious and bright. The wool twist pile cream carpet and the superb dusky pink



The master bedroom at Chamarel House is a haven of quiet refinement. A king-size bed anchors the space with comfort and grace, while the ceiling light and fan add both elegance and ease. Every detail speaks of thoughtful design—a room where rest feels like a privilege and beauty lives in the balance.

The Boudoir at Chamarel

The lady of the house retreats to her boudoir, a haven of serenity within Chamarel House. The master bedroom, anchored by a stately king-size bed, exudes quiet grace and comfort. Overhead, a ceiling light and fan lend both elegance and ease, casting soft illumination across tastefully curated décor. Every element speaks of intention and care—a space where rest is cherished and beauty resides in gentle harmony.

suede curtains with their stylish pennant pelmets and swags make this room even more splendid. A Globe-shaped colour TV set rests proudly on a table mounted on four round pillars. This is also in rosewood finish to match the rest of the furniture in the room. The bed sits directly opposite a door leading to an en-suite shower and toilet which provide the convenience whilst the ceiling fan & light provide a cosy atmosphere. Nothing makes a bedroom more beautiful and appealing than a beautiful woman to share it with, and I have the perfect one. ✍

The Greenroom

This is another huge bedchamber, reserved for guests. We nicknamed it the Greenroom because all the furnishings have shades of green. When we moved in we decided to keep the original décor. The suede bedroom suite is our original marital furniture and when we first bought it (over 30 years ago), the entire suite

The Greenroom, so called
because all the furnishings and furniture are covered with green suede.

A window view

was covered with maroon suede and cost £1000. Only six of them were made. Since then the suite has had two facelifts. The first time we recovered it we kept it maroon and it cost us £760. The second time it cost £1600 and we decided to use green suede. On the wall hangs a huge painting of a landscape; and on either side of the painting hang two large frames containing two of our wedding pictures. Both of my brothers stayed in that room with their respective wives during their visits to England in 1999 and 2000. The flooring is covered with a wall-to-wall cream tight-piled carpet. The three-quarter dropped green velvet curtains titivating the window typify our taste. ✍

David's Bed-chamber

Several couples have occupied this greenroom as our guests. They include:

Mr. Indrassen Vencatachellum (my cousin) and his ex-French wife Beatrix
Mr. Hugh Monte and his wife Jean (Gina's ex-sister-in-law)
Mr. Rajen Vencatachellum (my cousin) and his wife Nigee
Mr. Peter Said and his wife Mary (Gina' eldest sister)
Mr. Annoux Govinden and his wife Maligaye and children. (my niece and grand nieces and nephews)
Mr. Prega Valaydon (an old friend of mine)
Mr. Tim Pichowski and his partner Pat (my daughter)
Mr. Hamid Abdool-Rahman
However, three of the most important guests were my eldest brother Marday, his wife Manie, My brother Kisna, his wife Peddy, My nephew Doraj, and his wife Comila

They all would probably be surprised to know that the bedroom is still as it was.

My brother Kisna and his wife Peddy spending a few weeks with us.

In the heart of Chamarel House's green room—so named for its lush suede furnishings—Dr. Devadassen Chellen sits gracefully alongside Comila at the foot of the king-size bed. The room, wrapped in rich emerald tones, offers a sense of calm and quiet luxury, its textures inviting touch and its purpose clear: a guest room where comfort meets elegance. Their presence brings warmth to the space, turning a moment of rest into one of connection, where family and friendship settle gently into the folds of green.

This is his resting place. To unwind he plays on his computer and/or listens to his 60's music. ✍

Study/Library

The library used to be located on the ground floor next to the Utility room and overlooking the back garden. It has now moved to the second floor. It is the nerve centre of our house. Much of my time is spent in this room working on my computer. When Maurice moved out into his flat in Tunbridge Wells, and now into a two-bedroom house in Hailsham and his bedchamber became available. I converted it into a study/restroom for myself as a quiet retreat. Since I retired, this is where I have been spending most of my time doing all my thinking and writing. It is fitted with a desktop and two 52" flat-screen 3D colour TV and spot lights. It also houses the CCTV surveillance equipment. The silver plated chandelier represents the three lives in this house, ✍

◀BEFORE

▼NOW

The Hall & Landing

This was the next part of the house to have a facelift. A bronze sculpture of my late mum guards the bottom of the stairs. It was especially made in memory of her. The Hall is adorned with four oil paintings by E. Grandjean, a cuckoo clock and a picture frame fish tank with five live gold fish. Whilst the landing is embellished with a vast tapestry showing four huge tigers. The staircase leads the way to the upstairs bedrooms, bathroom and an en suite shower. A ceiling trapdoor offers access to the eaves. ✍

The Play/Activity Room

David and I spend quite a bit of time in this room competing with each other or

The landing at Chamarel House exudes quiet grandeur, a space where elegance lingers in every detail. Three ceiling lights cast a warm, golden glow—like halos suspended in air—illuminating the rich textures and thoughtful design. Framing the view is a Louis XIV curtain, its folds regal and theatrical, as if history itself had paused to admire the scene. This is not merely a passage-way, but a moment of grace between rooms—a place where light, fabric, and memory meet in silent conversation.

"In this house, every step tells a story—my mother's bronze grace at the foot of the stairs, Grandjean's brushstrokes on the walls, and golden fish swimming through time. Even the tigers on the landing seem to guard our dreams. This is not just a hall—it's a gallery of love, legacy, and quiet wonder."

exercising with our keep-fit equipment. ✍

The Utility Room

This is an extended part of the kitchen where Gina spends some of her time keep-

Royal Pause at the Snooker Table

In the heart of the playroom, the snooker table stands like a stage for quiet competition and laughter—David's domain of leisure and skill. But today, it's shared with a royal guest: Princess Mini, perched regally atop the green felt, her gaze both curious and commanding. She rests there as if to say,
"This game needs a touch of elegance." —I want to play too.
In this room, the lines between sport and companionship blur, and every moment becomes a scene in a cherished family story.

In the hum of the utility room, Gina stands poised with Lord DeMilo nestled gently in her arms—a regal presence wrapped in fur and quiet dignity. Her voice, soft yet playful, carries the familiar question: "Ready for your grooming?" It's a ritual of care and connection, where brushes become instruments of affection and each stroke affirms a bond woven through trust. The room, usually a place of chores, transforms into a salon of love, where Gina's touch and Lord DeMilo's patient gaze turn the ordinary into something tender and ceremonial.

ing the house clean. ✍

Private sitting Area

This room is located on the ground floor next to the utility room and overlooking the back garden, originally designed to be a study/library and was the nerve centre of our house. Much of my time was spent in this room working on my computer. Equipped with an L-shaped cream leather settee with footstool, desktop and TV, it has become Gina's perfect quiet hiding place where she spends her time surfing the net or listens to her music. If you are 5ft 8in tall or over, then you would be wise to watch out for the gold-plated chandelier hanging from the ceiling otherwise you are sure going to hurt your head with the five points hanging down representing the five lives that once occupied this house. Hanging on the walls are: an art work of a peacock which Gina bought during one of her visits to Mauritius and five frames, each representing a house and each contains selected photographs of some of the Chellens and the Sciclunas. You would find various houses, namely: the **House of Sydney S. Chellen**, the **House of Marday Chellen**, the **House of Kisna Chellen**, the **House of Armon Chellen** and the **House of George Scicluna.**

Sanctuary of Soft Light

In Gina's quiet room, time softens. She rests before the television, often lulled to sleep by flickering light and gentle voices. At other times, she explores Malta online—her homeland, her heartland—rediscovering its changing landscapes and familiar music. This space is more than a retreat; it's a sanctuary where memory and presence gently entwine.

The white patio door leading out offers a panoramic view of the garden, welcoming in the sun during the summer period. ✍

The Dining Reception

Every Sunday my family gathers here for lunch. A richly polished dining table and chairs with a matching sideboard grace this room. The full-length curtains around the patio door with their swags and tails were Gina's choice of decor. The principal feature of the room is the beautiful painting of a Victorian woman by Sir John Lavery (1856-1941) hanging on the wall many years ago. The ceiling crystal chandelier was imported from Italy. ✍

The Lounge

This is the main reception area where we receive most of our visitors. It has recently received an overhaul. The Onyx coffee-table-top sits proudly on a gilt frame supported by four strong and tireless statues. Above the black sideboard hangs a 52" flat screen TV that provides a unique focus for the room. On the floor next to the sideboard is a beautiful replica of a sea-tortoise imported from Mauritius. ✍

The Kitchen

This is where my wife Gina spends most of her time. Recently redecorated, it now

gleams with both elegance and practicality. The cabinets, in soft light teak, lend natural warmth, while the black kitchen-top catches the morning light like a quiet smile. The open-plan kitchen-diner offers room for both preparation and conversation, a place where meals and memories are made. Gina has arranged everything with care: spices in neat rows, utensils within easy reach, and fresh plants often gracing the windowsill. It's not just a kitchen—it's her sanctuary, her stage, and the beating heart of our home.✍

The Conservatory

This is the quietest and coolest place in the house all year round. Princess Mimi

Chamarel's Hearth

This kitchen at Chamarel House is more than a place for meals—it's a sanctuary of warmth and memory. Here, the kettle hums like a gentle prelude, and the air carries the scent of stories steeped in devotion. Gina moves through the space with quiet grace, turning everyday rituals into acts of love and legacy. Whether she's crafting a birthday tribute, refining a memoir line, or simply preparing tea for a grandchild, the kitchen becomes a stage for tenderness and transformation. It's where the heart of the house pulses strongest—steady, soulful, and always simmering with meaning.

This is where the kettle hums, stories simmer, and Gina stirs love into every ritual—Chamarel's heart beats in this kitchen.

used to spend lots of her time in this part of the house, but now that she is gone, Lord DeMilo and Lady Tara have made it their territory. The bed of the ceiling is lined with a fine pink honeycomb sun-repellent concertina blind whilst the sides are lined with pink strips of sun-reflector material. `The great feature of this section is the beautiful views ***over the back garden landscape***. ✍

The art of staying

Staying is an art. It's not passive, not accidental. It's a choice made over and over again—sometimes in joy, sometimes in weariness, sometimes in silence. And it's in the staying that love reveals its true shape.

My cousin Rajen Vencatachellum relaxing in our conservatory. That was unfortunately his last visit. We shared some good times together. Of all the cousins living in England, he was the one we frequented most.

Gina and I didn't stay because it was always easy. We stayed because it mattered. Because beneath the disagreements, the disappointments, and the long stretches of ordinary days, there was something worth holding onto. Something sacred.

There were seasons when we felt out of sync—when the rhythm of life pulled us in different directions. But even then, we found ways to return. A shared meal. A walk in the garden. A handwritten note left on the kitchen top. These small gestures became lifelines, reminders that love isn't just felt—it's maintained.

Staying meant learning to see each other anew. Gina changed, and so did I. We grew, we shed old skins, we reinvented ourselves. And each time, we had to reintroduce ourselves to one another—not with fanfare, but with curiosity and care. "Who are you now?" "What do you need?" "How can I love you better?"

We learned to stay through illness, through grief, through the quiet ache of miss-

"Gina and I have been married for fifty-five years—a lifetime shaped by shared joys, quiet trials, and the art of growing together. Chamarel House holds the imprint of that journey. It is not only our home but a living archive of our devotion, a place where love has matured like fine oak, steady and enduring. Within its walls, our story is woven into every curtain fold, every lamp's glow, every echo of laughter down the hall. Here, we have not only built a life—we have refined it, celebrated it, and offered it as a legacy to those we hold dear. Chamarel House is the canvas; our marriage, the masterpiece in progress."

ing family. We stayed through the mundane and the miraculous. Through the years when time felt generous, and the ones when it felt cruel. And in staying, we discovered a deeper kind of intimacy—one that doesn't rely on novelty, but on knowing.

Gina's way of staying was graceful. She didn't just endure—she embraced. She made our home a sanctuary, our rituals sacred, our love visible. Her devotion was never loud, but it was unwavering. And in her presence, I found the strength to stay too.

Now, as we look back on decades of shared life, I see that staying was never about perfection. It was about commitment. About choosing each other, again and again, even when the world offered easier paths. And in that choice, we found something rare: a love that lasts.

The Tapestry

Every life is a tapestry—stitched with joy and sorrow, threaded with memory and meaning. Ours, Gina and mine, is rich with colour. Not always bright, not always smooth, but undeniably ours. And every thread tells a story.

Some threads shimmer with celebration: our wedding day in Qormi, the decorated Mercedes, the Coral anniversary, the quiet triumphs of making a home from scratch. Others are darker—moments of fear, of loneliness, of uncertainty. But even those have their place. They give depth. They give contrast. They remind us that love is not just light—it's the courage to walk through shadow together.

Gina has always been the weaver. With her words, her rituals, her devotion, she's stitched meaning into every corner of our life. Her tributes—they're not just expressions. They're threads. They bind us to each other, to our families, to the legacy we hope to leave.

And woven into it all are the people. My in-laws George and Assunta, who blessed Gina with strength and grace. My own family in Mauritius, whose absence shaped me as much as their memory. Our siblings, our friends, our neighbours. Each one a thread. Each one part of the pattern.

Now, as we stand on the edge of our Emerald anniversary, I see our tapestry not as finished, but as ongoing. There are still threads to add. Still stories to tell. Still moments to stitch into the fabric of our shared life.

And when the time comes—whether it's five years from now or fifty—I hope someone will look at what we've woven and see not just a marriage, but a masterpiece of love, resilience, and devotion.

Symbols and sacred things

Some things speak louder than words. A stamp. A bouquet passed from sister to sister. These are not just objects—they are symbols, sacred in their simplicity, rich in emotional weight. Over the years, Gina and I have come to treasure these quiet emblems of our journey.

The **Malta stamp**—that tiny square of fate—was more than postage. It was prophecy. It marked the beginning of a love story that defied borders, expectations, and even papal protocol. That stamp didn't just carry a letter—it carried destiny.

The **peacock**, proud and radiant, became a motif of beauty and resilience. I saw in it a reflection of our love—bold, layered, and unapologetically vibrant.

There were other symbols too. The **wedding dress**, worn with pride and reverence, became a garment of transformation. The **bouquet**, handed to Gina by Evelyn with a few whispered words of wisdom, carried the weight of sisterhood and hope. The **decorated Merc**, ribbons fluttering in the wind, was not just a car—it was a chariot of celebration, carrying us from vows to revelry.

Devotion in daily life

Love, when lived long enough, becomes less about fireworks and more about

rhythm. It's not always dramatic—it's deliberate. It's the way Gina folded the laundry with care, the way we both knew when silence was enough.

Daily life became our canvas. Not every day was easy, but every day was ours. We built a life on small rituals: morning tea, handwritten notes, shared glances across the dinner table. These weren't just habits—they were acts of devotion. Repeated, refined, remembered.

Gina had a way of turning the ordinary into something sacred. She scrubbed our first flat until it felt like home. She decorated corners with symbols of Malta, of memory, of meaning. Even the way she placed a vase of flowers on the windowsill felt like a prayer—an offering to beauty, to presence, to love.

We didn't need luxury. We needed each other. And in the quiet hours—when the world was asleep and the kettle steamed—we found our rhythm. We learned each other's moods, each other's needs. We learned when to speak and when to simply be.

There were challenges, of course. Night shifts. Shared bathrooms. Unsettling neighbours. But Gina met each one with grace. She didn't just endure—she transformed. Her devotion wasn't loud, but it was unwavering. And in her presence, I found the strength to show up too.

Even now, decades later, our rituals remain. A shared walk. A quiet meal. A glance that says, "I'm still here." These are the threads that hold us. These are the vows we renew—not with ceremony, but with consistency.

Devotion in daily life is not about perfection. It's about presence. It's about choosing each other, again and again, in the smallest of ways. And in those choices, we've built a love that lasts.

The quiet celebrations

Not every celebration needs a crowd. Some of the most meaningful ones happen in the hush of a shared room, in the flicker of candlelight over a modest meal, in the way Gina and I would look at each other and know—this moment matters.

We marked birthdays with laughter and handwritten cards. Anniversaries with simple dinners, sometimes just the two of us, sometimes with a few dear friends. There were no fireworks, no grand speeches. Just presence. Just love. Just the quiet joy of having made it another year together.

Gina had a gift for making even the smallest occasion feel special. She'd place flowers on the table, fold napkins with care, and choose music that matched the mood. Her captions for photos—playful, poetic, precise—turned snapshots into keepsakes. She didn't just celebrate the day; she celebrated the feeling.

Some of our most tender rituals were spontaneous. A brief hug in the kitchen. A shared sunrise. A kiss before sleep. These moments didn't need planning—they needed presence. And in them, we found renewal.

Even in hard times, we tried to celebrate what remained. After disagreements, we'd find our way back with a gesture, a joke, a quiet "I'm sorry." That, too, was a kind of celebration—a recognition that love had endured.

Now, as we approach our 55 years of marriage, we look back not just on the big days, but on the quiet ones. The ones that didn't make headlines but made a home. The ones that stitched joy into the fabric of our life.

Because in the end, it's not the size of the celebration that matters—it's the sincerity. And in that, Gina and I have been rich beyond measure.

Love as legacy

Some stories end with a full stop. Ours ends with a thread—one that continues to weave through the lives we've touched, the memories we've made, and the love we've lived.

Gina and I didn't set out to leave a legacy. We set out to love. But in loving—faithfully, imperfectly, fiercely—we created something that lasts. Not just in photographs or anniversaries, but in the way we showed up for each other. In the rituals we built. In the words Gina wrote and the silences we honoured.

Our legacy lives in the pages of this memoir. In the vows we renewed through action. In the captions that turned moments into meaning. In the poems that stitched emotion into language. Gina's artistry—her gift for turning life into lyric—ensures that our story won't fade. It will echo. It will guide.

It lives in the symbols we cherished:

The Malta stamp, a talisman of fate.

The peacock, proud and radiant.

The bouquet from Evelyn, passed with sisterly wisdom.

Each one a vessel of devotion. Each one a reminder that love is found in the details. It lives in the people we've loved—our families, our friends, the strangers who became part of our tapestry. It lives in the way we forgave, the way we stayed, the way we celebrated the quiet victories.

And it lives in the future. In the hearts of those who read these words and feel seen. In the couples who find courage in our story. In the children and grandchildren who inherit not just our name, but our example.

Fifty-five years of marriage is no small feat. But the true triumph is not in the number—it's in the depth. In the way we kept choosing each other. In the way we turned ordinary days into sacred ones. In the way we loved, not just when it was easy, but especially when it was hard.

So here we are. The final chapter. Not an ending, but a benediction.

May our story be a lantern!

May our love be a legacy!

And may the tapestry we've woven continue to warm hearts long after we're gone!✍

Epilogue (in Verse)

I've longed to write my life's own tale—
A quiet dream I hoped would sail.
And now it's done—my heart feels light,
A goal fulfilled, a deep delight.

Through memories soft, I took a ride,
Back through the years I'd tucked inside.
I didn't show the whole display,
Just pieces I chose to portray.

Mauritius holds a tender place—
Its warmth, its charm, its gentle pace.
And England too—though skies may frown,
Its quiet grace still brings renown.

Since retiring, we've roamed a bit,
With Gina close—each trip a hit.
And now, at eighty, here I stand,
Time's quiet whisper close at hand.

What lies ahead? I cannot say—
A final trip, some distant way.
I'll worry when that call is due;
Until then, skies remain bright blue.

I've lived with love, been truly blessed—
A family near, a heart at rest.
My wife, my children, grands, and cats,
Bro Marday—though he's far from chats.

The nieces, nephews—lives full-grown—
Have worries of their own well-known.
I'm not quite yet a bother, still,
And hope I never fit that bill.

A crystal ball? No, not for me.
But maybe I'll live past ninety-three.
Perhaps a note from Charles will show,
And crown me with a birthday glow.

Though I do hope I don't provoke
By mishearing every joke—
Or lying in a ward somewhere,
Accusing nurses in despair.

When comes the end, I pray I sleep,
So loved ones need not sigh or weep.
But while I'm well, I'll dance along,

Assuming each tomorrow's strong.

Some joys may fade as years increase,
But gratitude will never cease.
And so I say, before I'm through:
Thank You, Lord, for life so true.

But if, perchance, You bend the rule
And grant me one more life to fuel…
I won't protest. I'll just begin—
To live it all once more… within.

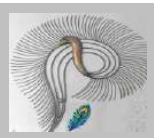
And so, as my reflections settle,
I turn toward the place that shaped them all…

Mauritius.

Mauritius has always been more than a postcard paradise. For those of us who grew up in its quiet corners, it was a place of barefoot belonging, of whispered stories carried on the wind, of lives stitched together by resilience and routine. But each time I return, I find the island altered—not just in skyline and commerce, but in spirit. The rhythms of daily life have shifted; the familiar has been repackaged, renamed, or erased. What was once intimate now feels curated for someone else's gaze.

This reflection, drawn from my article *The Other Side of Mauritius* in the *Mauritius Times*, blends memory, longing, and the quiet ache of returning to a homeland that no longer fits the shape of my heart. It is both tribute and elegy—a poem for the places we carry within us, even when they've changed beyond recognition.

The sea still sings—



"If home is where the heart is then Chamarel house is definitely my home."

but not for me.

Its lullaby now hums for tourists:
sunburnt laughter,
plastic sandals,
cocktails clinking
where once we whispered secrets
into the wind.

I returned
with a suitcase of memory:
creased photographs,
tamarind on my tongue,
hoping the streets might remember
how I walked them—
barefoot,
brave,
belonging.

But the island has changed its accent.
The old woman who sold *gateaux piment*
outside my brother Kisna's shop
is gone.
Her stall replaced
by a glass boutique
selling imported dreams.

I search for the boy I was
in the lagoon's mirror—
but he's blurred now:
a ripple,
a shadow,
a question.

And still,
the *filao* trees stand.
Still,
the mountains keep their silence.

Still,
the rain falls soft as forgiveness
on the tin roofs of memory.

I do not belong here anymore.
But I do not belong anywhere else.
So I walk—
between what was
and what is—
gathering the wreckage
of my longing
like driftwood
on the other side of Mauritius.✍

A GENTLE, BUT SERIOUS MESSAGE TO MY CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN

Chamarel: A House That Breathes Us

"Every home has its hush — that sacred stillness where memory lingers in the sunlight and love finds new paws to rest upon. The Conservatory is ours: once Mimi's throne, now DeMilo and Tara's gentle kingdom, where the garden leans in to listen and time softens its stride. Chamarel is more than a house. It's where your mother and I poured our dreams into walls and windows, where birthdays bloomed, vows deepened, and ordinary days became sacred. We built it with love, with sacrifice, and with the quiet hope that it would one day cradle generations — not just in memory, but in presence. So I ask you, gently my children and with all my heart: please don't sell it off when we're gone. Let it remain, not as a monument, but as a living invitation. A place to return to. A place to feel us. Let the garden keep whispering. Let the cat and dog keep watch. Let Chamarel continue to breathe the rhythm of our lives. If you ever wonder what to do with it, remember this: it holds you too. Your laughter, your footsteps, your stories. It's part of you, just as you are part of us."

Photo taken by Rajendra Motay in front of his house. 10, December, 2003

Gina and I were on our way to witness the wedding of my niece, Rubina, to Steve—a joyful occasion marked by tradition and love. Gina chose to wear a sari, honoring the moment with grace and cultural pride.

As we traveled, I couldn't help but reflect on my own journey. When I first set foot on UK soil on 3rd April 1967, I carried just one small suitcase and 200 rupees—roughly £4—in my pocket. Unlike Oscar Wilde, who famously declared his genius at customs, all I had to declare were my hopes and dreams.

Chapter Twelve

THE GALLERY…

CHAPTER 12 - THE GALLERY

Flood Chaos

Torrential rain caused floods throughout West Malling. Ditton place was one of dozens of places that suffered in the downpour. About six inches of water had fallen for three consecutive days, which is more than would normally be expected for a whole month. The road near our house was flooded. So was our garden. Luckily no water came into the house (2003). ✍

The Art Gallery

▶*This Peacock graces our dinning room. Gina bought it in Mauritius for 9,000 rupees.*

▲*This beautiul canvas painting adorn our kitchen bar*

Power and glory immortalised in bronze—Augustus rides triumphant, leading Rome's legacy into eternity.

▲*My Jane Foord-King trophy for "Best Bedside Manner".*

▲*This beautiful statue of Augustus Caesar stands majestically on a marble base. We bought it as a memento of our holidays in Rome.*

▶*The stag-head reminds me of my maiden visit to Mauritius. When I bought it for £35 it had a digital clock in the centre. It looks much better with the picture of my family.*

▶*Woven with fresh rattan but steeped in old stories, this armchair stands as a quiet paradox—renewed in form, yet unchanged in soul. Its frame still creaks with the rhythm of my father's days, and though the weave is new, the seat remembers. It remains a throne of memory, sturdy as the man who once filled it, holding the weight of time with grace.*

The Photo Gallery 1

My nephew Prega (AKA Dasson). He is a Tourist Guide with a company called SummerTimes.

His wife, Nirmala (née Mooneyan) is a house wife.

They have two sons,

namelySanjiven and Sharavaren:

Sharavanen (far right

)

Annoux Govinden, retired Accountant

▶*Nirmala*

and

◀*Sanjiven.*

My niece, Maligaye, Beauty therapist, married to Annoux and they have three children

Yovan

Shanen, lives in France

Yordina Lives in France

Ethan Kishaan Chellen-Watson, age 12. Born in Sydney, Australia on 17th March 2004.

◄ *My niece Priscilla with Australian ex-husband Robert Watson. They got married in Mauritius on 7th December 1998 and went to live in Sydney, Australia. Sadly, after splitting with her husband, she retuned to her homeland with her two boys.*

At the time of writing, she was working as a Talent Acquisition Manager at Ceridian, Mauritius.

Krish was attending the Clavis International Primary school, at Moka, Mauritius and was in year four and Kishaan was attending Le Bocage International School, at Moka, Mauritius and he was in Form one.

They both love soccer because it is a fun sport. Krish is a supporter of Real Madrid whilst Kishaan supports Chelsea FC. They are great fans of Cristiano Ronaldo because they think his skills and game play are much more sophisticated than most players they knew.

Kishaan enjoys going to school and his favourite subjects are, science and English. He is mad about video games and should you decide to challenge him at chess beware as he might just beat you!

Krish Ryan Chellen-Watson, age 8. Born in Sydney, Australia on 22nd October, 2007.►

▼ My niece Devegi (AKA Camalah, previously a Bank Clerk) with husband Ranjendra Motay ►(previous a teacher, now manages his own business.

▲*Vallee Motay is married to Silven and they have one child*

▲

Shankara was born on 8th March 1997, making him an amazing individual, as all Pisceans tend to be.

▶ My nephew Devadassen Chellen (AKA Doraj) is a Doctor of medicine and a specialist in Cardiology) with wife, Comila Ramasawmy who has an M.Phil., in agriculture.

They were married on 9 December 2001.

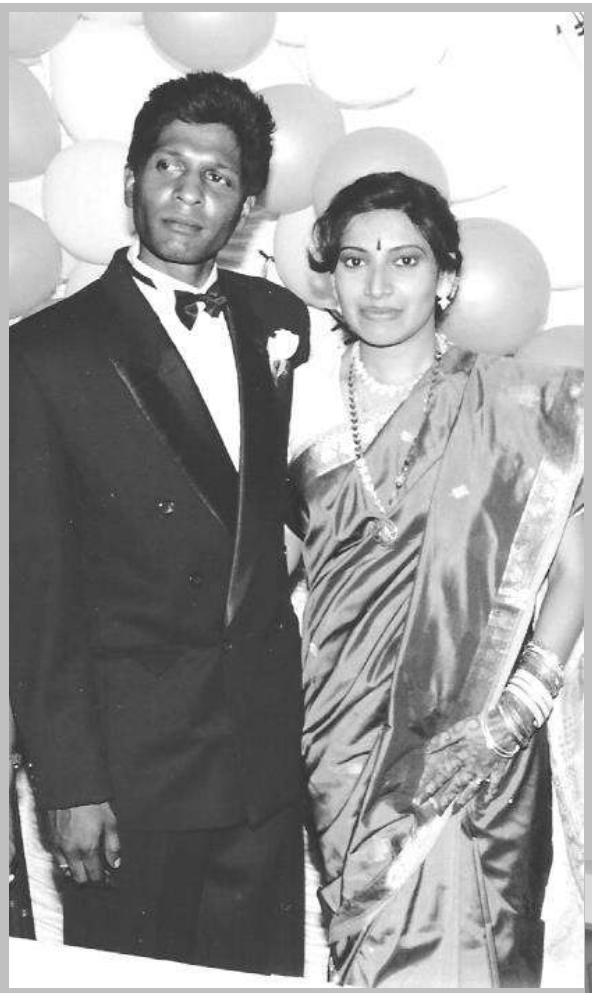
Doraj obtained his MBBS in 1996 at The Second State Medical Institute of Tashkent.

In May 1998, the Faculty of Tashkent Institute for Advance Medical Studies awarded him an MD in infectious diseases.

In 2008, the University of Victor Segalen, Bordeaux, has also awarded him a degree of specialist in Cardiology.

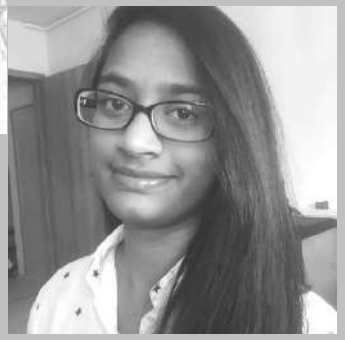
Currently he is practicing medicine at Victoria hospital in Mauritius and he has his private practice at 172 Royal Road, Rose Hill, Mauritius.

▼Below is Keerthika.
She was born on 9th September 2011



Dr. Devadassen Chellen and Comila—wisdom and warmth, walking hand in hand.

(1961-2014)
My nephew Dessiga (Director of I.V.T.B) with wife Jayshree Kalasopatan (Assistant Permanent Secretary to the Minister of Health and Quality of life) and their two children: Brandon and Brenda. Dessiga obtained his BA in hotel management in Leeds, England. Completed his MA in University of Mauritius and he was completing his doctorate when he tragically met his untimely death in Seychelles.



Jaysheree

Brenda

Brandon

My niece Rubina ▶ with Australian husband Steven Craig Smallsman.

They both got married in Mauritius on 10th December 2003

and are now residing in Australia.

This is the only wedding I managed to witness.

Rubina loves: reading, listening to music, playing tennis and volleyball.
She speaks fluent English and French.

In 2001, she obtained her bachelor's degree in commerce at the University of Sydney. At the time of writing she was in Singapore working as Regional Product Manager with Asia Pacific at Wolters Kluwer Financial Services.

Kiki

Jayden

Nadia Danapakion Chellen
(*b*. 24th June 1973)

My niece Nadia is a beautiful spinster waiting for Prince charming. At the time of writing she was in Canada working as a Solutions Consultant at BDO Canada LLP.
She is an enigma.
I asked her to tell me a little bit about herself and this is what she had to say:

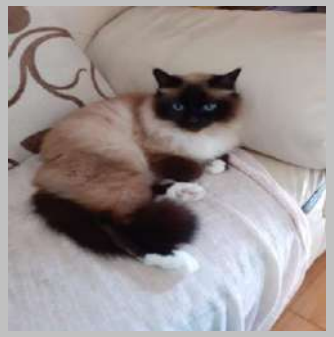
"I enjoy a variety of things particularly watching movies, playing badminton, shopping and going out. I hate idleness, messy or dirty places and hypocrite people. I do not like taking too much time eating."

As the photograph shows, she is quite trim and elegant. She speaks fluent English and French and of course her native language: "Creole patois".

"A house may shelter your bones, but only a cat curls into your soul and makes it home."

◀*Princess MIMI*

◀*Duchess Bella I 2009-2010*



Lady Tara and Lord De Milo are the last two Birman's cats to bless our house and will probably be the last!

A Crown fit for our Princess Mimi.

Bought for her at: the Royal Gallery Shop. London.

▶*Duchess Bella II 2010-2011*

◀*Lady Tara 7.11.2009-2025*

▶*Lord De Milo 2009-*

The Photo Gallery 2

Carmela Zammit (née Muscat)

Joseph and Margaret Muscat.

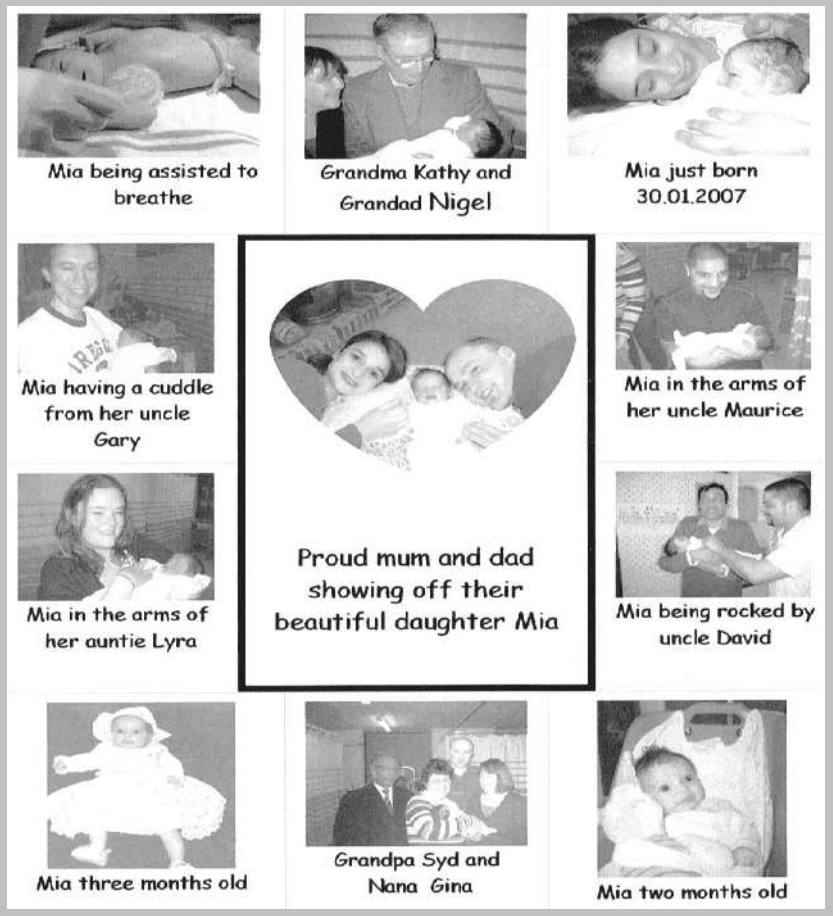
Joseph and Margaret Muscat are Gina's grandma, grandpa from her mother's side. Carmela Zammit and Kalina Azzopardi are two of five aunts.Helen Zammit is one of her cousins.

Carmela emigrated and had five children all born in Melbourne, Australia.

▼ *Kalina Azzopardi (née Muscat) with Helen Zammit*

The Photo Gallery 3

The unexpected arrival of baby Mia into our lives provided Gina and I with a grandchild we never thought we would live to enjoy. God does indeed work in mysterious ways!



The Photo Gallery 4

"Here are the many faces of the woman who has graced my life for more than fifty years—each one a chapter, a season, a quiet miracle in our shared story."

From The 60's to the MILLENNIUM

GEORGINA PAULINE CHELLEN (née SCICLUNA)

the
70’s

the
80’s

the

90's

the

Millennium

“From an infant I was mewling and puking in my mother’s arms, to the last scene of all, that ends my story – my second childhood and mere oblivion: sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every-thing.”

1945- 2025

2017’s

"One hat, one heart, a thousand horizons."

2012’s

"In the land of endless sun, I found a friend with a pouch and a story to tell."

2011’s

“Not just dressed to im-press—dressed to honour.”

2010’s

“Shaken, not stirred—styled to perfection.”

2005’s

Draped in white, lost in thought.

1950’s

1960’s

“Looking every bit the scholar in 1960—brains, style, and confidence in one frame.”

1970’s

“Elegance, confidence, and a touch of vintage charm.”

1980’s

“Before smart phones, but already looking smart in specs.”

1990’s

“A winning mind in the dawn of the computer era.”

2000’s

“A new millennium, a new chap-ter, and the same curiosity for what lies ahead.”

Car gallery

In 1967, I learnt to drive with the British School of Motoring (BSM) in a small mini cooper. I was in Wales then, but when I was due to take my test I was moving to Kent, England. I was determined to have my own car instead of relying on public transport. So, I took a few lessons with a school of motoring in Maidstone before requesting a test. Whilst I was still a learner-driver I borrowed a friend's car and ended up crashing it into a tree. I was due to go to Malta, but I had to cancel it to pay for the damage. After three attempts, I was glad to pass my test. After working several hours of overtime on nights I had collected enough money to buy

My first car, Morris Marina 1.8 bought for £700 in 1973

My second car a VW DerbyS 1.6 bought for £1700 in 1981

My third car VW Passat 1.8 bought for £7000 in 1984

My fourth car VW Polo Match 1.4 bought for £11000 in 2001

My fifth and current sport car BMW Z3 convertible sport 2.0 bought for £23000 in 2001, made famous by Pierce Bronson in James Bond.

My six and current family car Honda Civic Executive 1.6 bought for £9699 in 2007 and sold in 2025 for £1200.

SOME DATES TO REMEMBER

	Born	Married	Died
Assunta Scicluna (née Muscat)	01.01.1916		07.02.1996
David Andrew Chellen	02.01.1973		
Brandon Chellen	03.01.1995		
Brenda Chellen	08.01.1996		
George Scicluna	08.01.1906		23.10.1972
Priscilla Vijalutchmee Chellen	08.01.1971	07.12.1998	
Evelyn Magrin (née Scicluna)	09.01.1951	09.11.1963	
Jean Scicluna (née Jacob)	12.01.1946		
Sanjiven Chellen	14.01.2000		
Jean Paul Magrin	16.01.1984		
Marday Chellen	20.01.1936		
Yordina Govinden	24.01.1990		
Mia Pichowski	30.01.2007		
Melissa said (née Thoenes)	05.02.1971		
Paul Magrin	17.02.1948	09.11.1963	22.10.2013
Joe Scicluna	22.02.1943	09.11.1963	13.03.2006
Annoux Govinden	27.02.1952	24.08.1986	
Sabina Said	27.02.1980		
Sharavanen Chellen	14.02.2009		
Baby Grace Pichowski	02.02.2008		02.02.2008
Timothy Pichowski	04.03.1976		
Shankara Motay	08.03.1997		
Selven Sooben	09.03.1981	04.09.1905	
Karl	15.03.1986		
Mary Said (née Scicluna)	15.03.1944	31.10.1965	
Kishaan Watson	16.03.2004		
Shanen Govinden	19.03.1988		
Luke Said	22.03.2004		
Sydney Seringapatam Chellen	12.04.1945	08.08.1970	
Manie Chellen (née Ramsamy)	29.04.1941	27.05.1959	
Yovan Govinden	04.05.1999		
Gwyneth Zammit (née Scicluna)	04.05.1983		
Robert Watson	09.05.1972	07.12.1998	
Rubecca Calleja	10.05.1994		
Vanessa Magrin	18.05.1981	22.04.2007	
Georgina Pauline Chellen (née Scicluna)	30.05.1947	08.08.1970	

	Born	**Married**	**Died**
Princess Mimi	02.06.1997		
Harmon (AKA Dessiga) Chellen	17.06.1961	03.04. 1994	18.08.2014
Camalah (AKA Devegi) Motay (née Chellen)	14.06.1960	23.08.1981	
Steven Craig Smallsman	15.06.1975	10.12.2003	
Patricia Diana Chellen	07.06.1971		
Devadassen (AKA Doraj) Chellen	21.06.1969	09.12.2001	
Danapakion (AKA Nadia) Chellen	24.06.1973		
Navamah Chellen ((née Narainen)	25.06.1909		26.02.1991

Elvio Said	28.06.1973	28.10.2000	
Olivia Pichowski	09.06.2009		
Kisnamah Chellen (née Soobrayen)	25.06.1915		20.09.2007
Josiah Said	10.07.2005		
Anton Said	26.07.1966	02.09.1994	
Jaysheree Chellen (née Kalasoopatan)	28.07.1965	03.04.1994	
Charlot Muscat	03.08.1980	22.04.2007	
Kaliadevi (AKA Rubina) Smallsman (née Chellen)	10.08.1977	10.12.2003	
Rajendra Motay	12.08.1954	23.08.1981	
Isabelle Said	26.08.1969	22.10.1993	
Keerthika Chellen	09.08.2011		
Armon Chellen	20.09.1990	21.07.1950	
Amber Said	28.09.1998		
Nadenumbal (AKA Maligaye) Govinden (née Chellen)	30.09.1963	24.08.1986	
Jayden Smallsman	28.09.2007		
Alan Scicluna	05.10.1975		
Gokilambal (AKA Comila) Chellen (née Ramasawmy)	24.10.1974	09.12.2001	
Krish Watson	23.10.2007		
Peter Said	01.11.1940	31.10.1965	
Maurice valentine Chellen	08.11.1979		
Kim Scicluna	13.11.1964		
Krish Sooben	17.11.2007		
Hayley Said	22.11.2003		
Vallee Sooben (née Motay)	23.11.1983	04.09.2005	
Karen Scicluna	23.11.1965		
	Born	**Married**	**Died**
Linda Said (née Sultana)	28.11.1967	02.09.1994	
Krishnamah (AKA Peddy) Chellen (née Padiachy)	04.12.1943	24.03.1968	14.03.2025
Edwin Scicluna	12.12.1952	12.12.1974	
Nirmala Chellen (née Mooneyan)	16.12.1970	07.09.1997	
Rose Scicluna (née Gatt)	20.12.1954	12.12.1974	
Seekrisna (AKA Kisna) Chellen	23.12.1941	24.03.1968	12.03.2014
Prega (AKA Dason) Chellen	25.12.1964	07.09.1997	

THE VENCATACHELLUMS

	Born	Married	Died
Rodney Vencatachellum	05.01.0000		
Vadivel (AKA Deva) Vencatachellum	29.01.1950		
Pakion Vencatachellapathee (née Vencatachellum)	12.02.1928	*d*	
Neeven Vencatachellum	02.03.1997		
Vassou Vencatachellum	13.03.1943		
Sabreena Vencatachellum	00.05.1999		
Goindamah Vencatachellum (née Chellen)	06.05.1908	06.09.1924-registry 27.10.1926-civil	19.12.1985
Cecillia Vencatachellum	25.05.1987		
Lomba Vencatachellum	07.06.1927		*d*
Vimla Vencatachellum	17.06.1971		
Rajen Vencatachellum	30.06.1934		*d*
Nagini Vencatachellum	24.07.1968		
Tyanigee AKA Mimi) Murday (née Vencatachellum)	30.08.1938		*d*
Annick Vencatachellum	04.09.1968		
Vel Vencatachellum	17.09.1928		*d*
Sinda soopramanien (née Vencatachellum)	30.09.1930		
Narainen Devan Vencatachellum	01.11.1902		*21.08.1984*
Siven Vencatachellum	17.11.1932		*d*
Kadress Vencatachellum	19.11.1940	19.08.1964	*d*
Indrassen Vencatachellum	22.12.1946		
Jegadassen Vencatachellum	00.00.0000		
Jeremi Vencatachellum	10.12.1984		
Marcus Vencatachellum	10.12.1984		
Glenda Vencatachellum	18.12.1969		
Julia Vencatachellum	00.00.1997		

"Important dates are more than calendar entries—they are sacred threads in the tapestry of love. Remembering a birthday, an anniversary, a farewell, is how we say: 'You matter. You're remembered. You're woven into my story.' These moments are not just about time passing, but about love persisting.

Each date is a doorway—into laughter shared, tears shed, promises made. To recall a loved one's birthday is to honour the day the world was graced by their presence. To mark an anniversary is to celebrate the endurance of devotion. Even the dates of parting carry weight, not in sorrow alone, but in gratitude for having loved so deeply.

In remembering, we keep the flame lit. We tell our family and friends: 'You are not forgotten. You are cherished in the rhythm of my days.' These dates become rituals of affection, quiet celebrations of belonging. They remind us that legacy is not built in grand gestures alone, but in the gentle act of remembering."

Many times when I see immigrants walking in the streets of London or elsewhere in Europe, I itch to go and talk to them just in case they might be my lost relations.

"We are the children of many sires, and every drop of blood in us in its turn betrays its ancestor."
Ralph Waldo Emerso

my first car. Here are the strings of cars that have shared my life. I am really surprised that my BMW and Honda have not gone to car-heaven yet! ✍

Tracing the Echoes: A Chellen Legacy Unfolds

For as long as I can remember, I've wondered about my ancestors. Who were they—great scholars or scoundrels, knights or knaves, princes or pirates, lords or loafers? Whatever their truth, they form an essential part of my heritage, and I've long felt the pull to uncover their stories.

Driven by curiosity and a quiet longing, I began my search. The first challenge was knowing where to start, but after immersing myself in a few books, the path began to reveal itself. Fortune smiled on me in 2001, when I learned that my cousin Kadress Vencatachellum had inherited a trove of information from my late uncle, Candasamy Chellen—notes passed down as far back as 1968, along with discoveries Kadress had gathered from other sources.

We eagerly shared and swapped our findings, united by a deep desire to understand our roots. Sadly, Kadress passed away shortly after returning to Mauritius in 2002, and I remain uncertain how far he progressed with his project. Yet, using the materials he entrusted to me, I've been able to fill in some of the gaps through my own research.

To my amazement, I discovered that the Chellen name echoes across the globe. Our lineage has reached far-flung corners of the world, including:

United States
Canada
Australia
New Zealand
Great Britain
The Netherlands
Spain
Northern Ireland and Ireland
South Africa
France
Switzerland
Germany
Italy
Malaysia
Mauritius

While exploring the Chellen International Registry, I discovered families who may be connected to me—threads waiting to be woven into the larger tapestry of

our shared legacy. Though I've yet to make contact, the journey continues, guided by curiosity and quiet hope.

As I trace these threads, I find myself listening not merely to facts and names, but to something deeper—an echo that calls across oceans and eras.

The name Chellen drifts like a whispered refrain: carried by wind, anchored in memory, scattered like seeds in foreign soil.

Each name a possibility. Each place, a pulse in the living map of belonging. I follow the echo, heart open, hoping to turn strangers into kin.

Here is the list:

GREAT BRITAIN

Avon

Ms Kate Chellen
Frenchay Hospital
Frenchay Park Road
Bristol
Avon
BS16 1LE

London

Mr and Mrs Edward Chellen
242 Bradenham
Boyson Road
Walworth
London
SE17 2BG

Gananda S Chellen
12 Hadleigh Road
London
N9 7BX

Mr Peter Chellen
21 Paxton House
|Morecambe street
Walworth, London
SE17 1DS

Herts

Amrawadee Chellen
183 Queens Road
Watford
Herts. WD1 2QH

Surrey

Angelay Chellen
231 Hook Road
Epsom
Surrey. KT19 8UA

Dewananda Chellen
9 Torridge Road
Thorton Heath
Surrey. CR7 7EZ

Leicester

Ms Emma J Chellen
13 Leopold Street
Loghborough
Leicester. LE11 0DL

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales

Mr Maxwell A Chellen
9 Pacific Way
Tura Beach.NS 2548

Victoria

J Chellen
6/15 Western Road
Boronia, VI 3155

ITALY

Roma

Signora Claudette Chellen
Via Erasmo Gattamelata
3000176 Roma

FRANCE

Bas Rhin

Mr Clement Chellen
11 Rue Augustin Fresnel,
67380 . Longolshein.
Bas Rhin

Bas Rhin

Mr Dominique Chellen
75 Route Neuhof
67100 Strasbourg
Bas Rhin

Paris

Mme Marie Edith Chellen
2 Rue Marietta Martin.
750 Paris

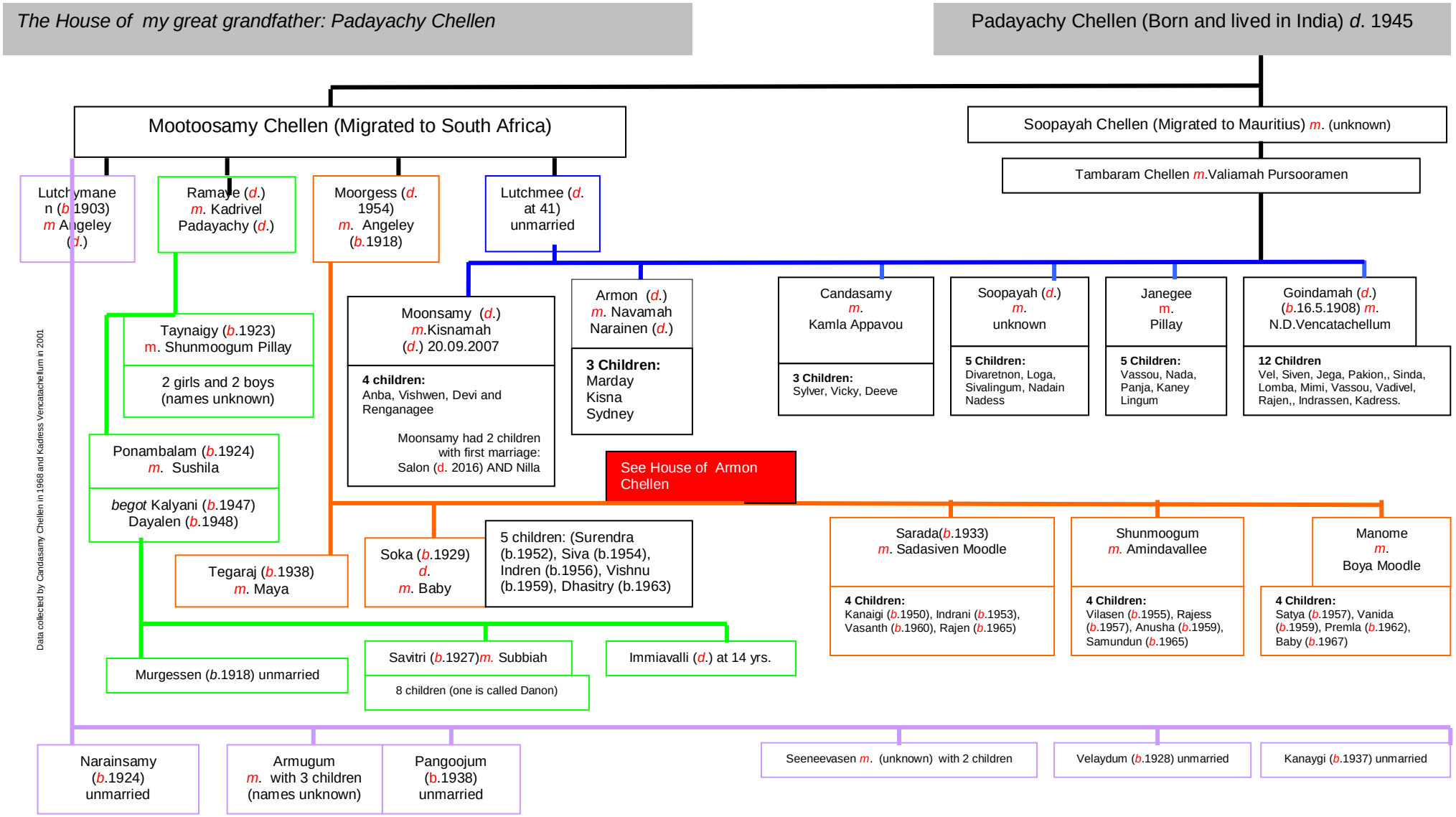
Paris

Mme Marie Raymonde Chellen
122 Rue Tour Entresol.
75016 Paris

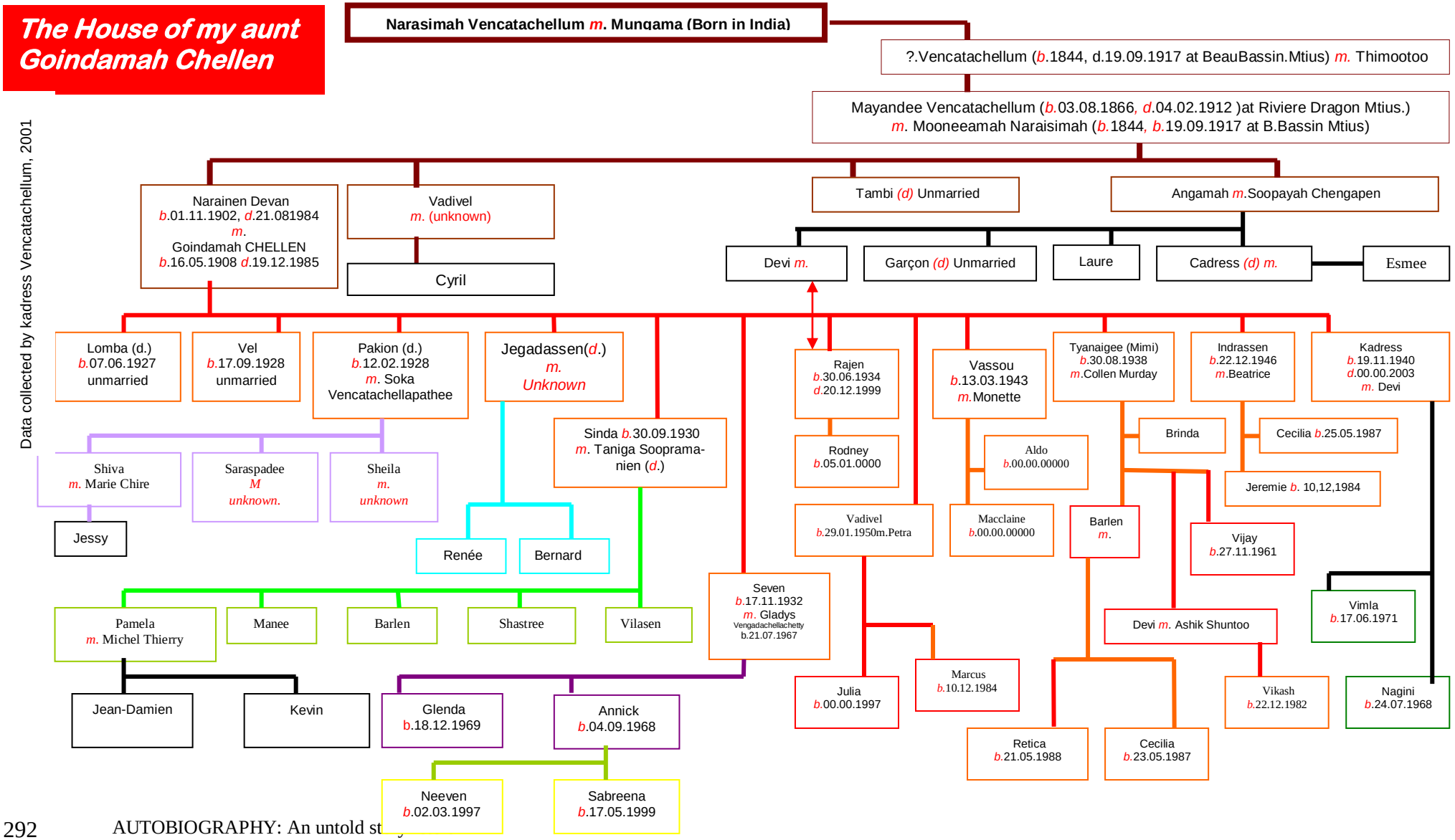
The Echo That Remains

"As I wrap up this personal odyssey… *I do so with gratitude—for the triumphs that lifted me, the trials that shaped me, and the people who walked beside me. My story is not a monument to perfection, but a testament to persistence, growth, and the quiet courage to keep going. If these pages have offered a glimpse into a life lived with intention, then I've succeeded. The legacy I leave is not in accolades or milestones, but in the moments that mattered and the values that endure. And now, with the pen set down, I look forward—not to an ending, but to everything still unwritten."*

The House of my great grandfather: Padayachy Chellen

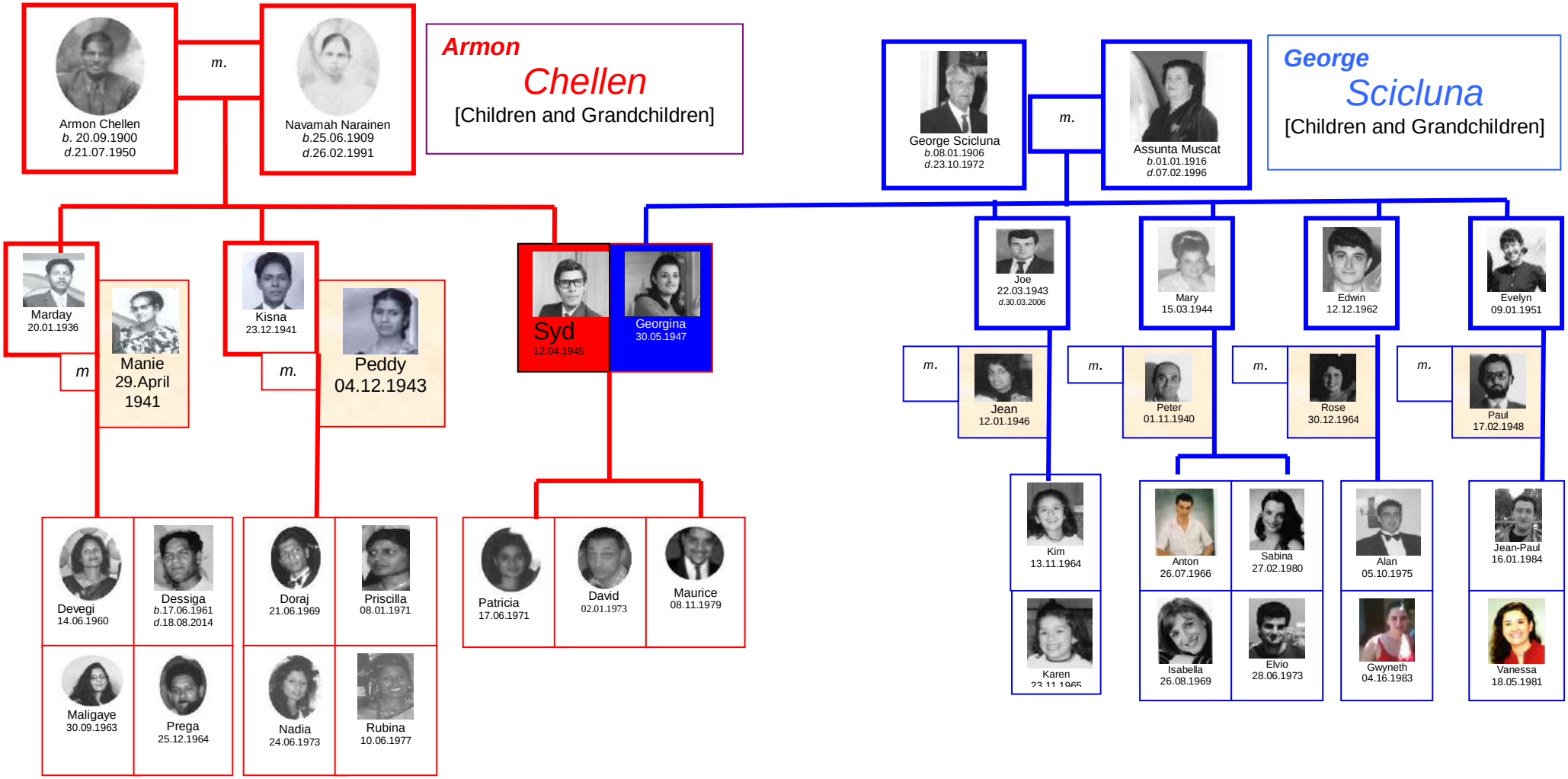


The House of my aunt Goindamah Chellen



Data collected by kadress Vencatachellum, 2001

The Houses of: Armon Chellen & George Scicluna



IMPORTANT DATES IN MY LIFE

April 12, 1945
I was born in Mauritius in a small village called Beau-Bois.

July 21, 1950
I lost my dad, Armon Chellen

Sept 15, 1963
My first appearance on stage in a French play.

March, 3, 1967
Left Mauritius for South Wales, UK.

August 1967
-My maiden visit to Malta
-My first date with Gina

April 1968
Gina and I got engaged

August 8, 1970
Married Gina Pauline Scicluna in Malta.

November 30, 1970
I qualified as a Psychiatric Nurse

March 1971
Moved from Wales to Kent, UK.

June 17, 1971
Birth of my daughter Patricia

January 2, 1973
Birth of my son David

March 24, 1977
-I qualified as a General Nurse
-Awarded the Jane Foord-King memorial prize for "Best Bedside Manner".

November 8, 1979
Birth of my son Maurice

1984
-Won the OSL prize for best Computer Assisted Learning program.
-Harper and Row published my first book: "Patient with a Mental Disorder".

April, 1985
Visited by my mum. Her first and only visit to the UK.

February 26, 1991
Death of my mum

March 28, 1995
My first address at a world conference in Harrogate.

June 2, 1997
Birth of Princess Mimi

June 1999
Visited by brother Marday and his wife.

September 29, 1999
15 days educational mission to Missouri, USA.

August 5, 2002
Visited by brother Kisna and his wife.

March 2003
Routledge PLC published my fifth book: The Essential Guide to the Internet for Health Professionals" – student edition in hardback and paperback and ebook.

December 3-29th, 2003
My fourth visit to Mauritius.

April 12, 2004
GPSbooksUK published my memoir, 1st Edition.

January 30, 2007
Birth of my first grand daughter – Mia.

February 2,2008
Birth and death of my second grand daughter- Grace

June 9, 2009
Birth of my third grand daughter Olivia.

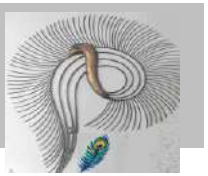
March 12, 2014
Death of my brother Kisna.

August, 18, 2014
Death of my Nephew Harmon Chellen.

September 2015
GPSbooksUK published my first of six novels 'thewreckage'.

March 14, 2025
Death of my sister-in-law, Peddy.

"My writing journey began in September 2015, with the publication of ***the*****wreckage** *through GPSbooksUK. Since then, eighteen stories have found their place in the world—each one a thread in a growing tapestry, one of them,* **Bride in Waiting***, woven from my own experience. Now, one tale steps into a new form, reimagined for the stage by Gaston Valaydon. Quietly, it prepares to emerge beneath the theatre lights, ready to speak in a different voice."*



NOTES

"An Untold Story Retold" is a tender reckoning
with memory and meaning—
an autobiography that stitches togcher the
quiet beats of life shaped by storytelling.

From the early flickers of imagination to
the spotlight of the stage, Sydney ***S. Chellen***
invites readers into a journey that's
both fiercely personal and universally resonant.

Through unspoken trials, joyful creation,
and the profound art of nartative reinvention,
this is not just a life remembered—
it's a ***life re-authored.***

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